



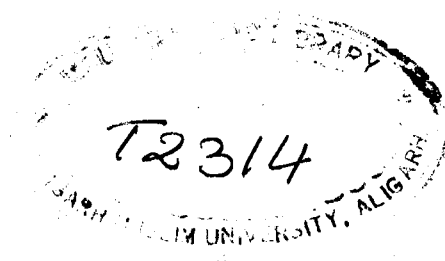
SHELLEY'S VIEW OF EVIL

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Chapter - I

INTRODUCTION

The obsession of mankind with the problem of evil is as old as the history of human existence. The primitive man of the pre-historic period suffered evil; the sophisticated man of the complex modern society is also experiencing the cruciating pangs of evil. Life is a unique blending of good and evil. It is, however, a baffling problem to define evil. Since evil is subjective and relative, it is better to define it in juxtaposition to good. It would also help to comprehend evil better if we approach the words good and evil from theological as well as from non-theological perspectives.

'GOOD' AND 'EVIL' AS NON-THEOLOGICAL TERMS-

Evil is one of the constellation of words that must be defined in relation to each other, e.g., right and wrong (moral terms describing human volitions and actions) and good and bad (referring not to what we do but to the experiences we undergo). Often evil is used to cover both the wrong and the bad -- both wrong volitions and bad experiences. Taking bad as opposed to good, it appears that "its basic meaning is that which we dislike, do not welcome, and would shun. That which all men would shun is the opposite of happiness, namely the state of misery,

reflecting the non-fulfilment and radical frustration of our nature."¹

"We have seen that from our human point of view, unaided by religious faith, the good is that which we welcome and the bad is that which we would shun. The analogous theological definition will be in terms of the divine purpose for the created world. Whatever tends to promote the attainment of that purpose will be good and whatever tends to thwart it will be bad. The full and irreversible fulfilment of that plan would be the complete good sought by God in His good in relation to His creation, whilst any final and irrevocable frustration of that plan would constitute irredeemable and ultimate badness."²

In the ethical sense evil is the absence of good or unsatisfied desire. But these definitions do not suffice. To define evil as the absence or opposite of good we will be faced with the problem 'what is good' and the answer is bound to be subjective and relative since it depends on individual standpoint. Again, to define evil as unsatisfied desire, presupposes that desire itself is not evil; if it is, its frustration is good rather than evil. And on the top of it to find supreme good in the satisfaction of desire, and evil in its frustration, ignores the possibility of a higher and external moral imperative taking precedence over mere personal desire.

Again from the theological point of view evil is that which does not conform to the will of God. Though apparently it appears to be

1 John Hick: Evil and the God of Love; Macmillan, London; 1966, p.15.

2 Ibid., pp. 15-16.

simple but in fact it poses great problem because the will of God is manifested by both direct command and by permission. Evil, like all other things, can only exist by divine permission and in this sense its existence is not contrary to the will of God. But the thing in itself and the fact of its existence are not the same thing. The will of God may permit the existence of an evil which in itself is directly opposed to that will; and such permission does not implicate God as the author or the cause of evil. It has always been perplexing. If evil is mere negation of good, it has no real existence. In fact the good exists in a lesser degree than is to be desired. The existence of the so-called evil means, therefore, that the universe is not perfect. Then it is no reflection on the goodness of God that He is pleased to let the world progress through imperfection to perfection. Such a progression is analogous to what is seen in the animal world. Relativity is another element in the problem of evil. Often under circumstances and in some relations a thing may be evil which is not really evil ultimately (cf. Partial evil, universal good - Alexander Pope, Essay on Man). But we cannot judge the circumstances because our knowledge is only partial as only a portion of the reality lies within our ken.

There are discernible many shades of evil -- social, political, religious, moral and metaphysical. Evil poses so great a problem because of the challenge it throws ^{to} ~~upon~~ the foundations of many religious beliefs as evil in the world seems inconsistent with the view that the

world was created and is maintained by an omnipotent and all-loving Creator. Of course since the fundamental tenets of creation and the role of God in the process of creation are different in different religious beliefs, the acuteness of the problem of evil differs from religion to religion. Let us discuss in brief the reaction of different religions on the face of the problem of evil and also their endeavour to justify, or at least to understand, the fact of evil.

One of the earliest religions of the world is Zoroastrianism which was founded on the teaching of the prophet 'Zarathustra' (popularly known as Zoroaster and hence the name of the religion), flourished in Persia and remained dominant for more than thousand years till the advent of Islam. The scripture, known as Avesta (or Zend-Avesta) consisting of various hymns, treatises and poems, deal in good details the doctrine of creation and the problem of good and evil.

Zarathustra's God is known as Ahura-Mazda ("The Wise Lord"), who has the attributes of a sky-God, like the God 'Varuna' of Hinduism. The religion is monolithic. Zoroaster denouncing the cult of Gods of popular religion, equating such beings with evil spirits who seduced men from the worship of the one Spirit. "The belief in the malicious opposition to the purified religion that he preached and the incompatibility of Ahura-Mazda's goodness with the creation of evil led Zoroaster to conceive of a cosmic opposition to God. He mentions Druj (The Lie), an evil force waging war against Ahura-Mazda" (The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Vol. 8, p. 381).

Then the question arises as to who created this evil spirit or at least, who tolerated its existence? If Ahura-Mazda did not create, or even tolerate, evil-spirit and if its creation and existence are ~~in~~ beyond the realm of Ahura-Mazda, then the latter obviously loses claim to omnipotence. And on the other hand, if it is He who created or tolerated evil, then His claim to being 'all-merciful' is shattered. To cope with this apparent contradiction the theologians have dealt in detail the whole ~~process~~ of the process of creation.

Historical time was divided into four eras, each lasting three thousand years. In the first era, God brings the angelic spirits and the prototype of creatures. Since God creates by means of thought since He foresees Angra-Mainyu (which is evil incarnate), the latter comes into existence. During the second era the primeval man and the primeval ox exist peacefully. But in the third era the Evil Spirit, Angra-Mainyu, succeeds in attacking and destroying them. From the seeds of these primeval beings men and animals arise and there is a mixture of good and evil in the world. The last era, beginning with Zoroaster's mission, will culminate in the final divine victory and the universe will then be restored to an ever-lasting, purified state in which the saved, now immortal, sing the praise of Ahura-Mazda.

This explanation fails to justify the existence of evil. If Angra-Mainyu arises through the thought of Ahura-Mazda, then the evil comes from the Creator. To get rid of this dilemma, another theory is

put forward which holds that both Ahura-Mazda and Angra-Mainyu issued from a first principle, Zurvan (Infinite Time). Zurvan is beyond good and evil since only with the realm of finite time is the contrast between good and evil meaningful.

"He preached an ethic based on the social life of the husbandman, the good man being one who tends his cattle and tills the soil in a spirit of peace and neighbourliness. The good man must also resist the worshipers of the daevas (gods) who, together with the evil spirit opposed to Ahura-Mazda, threatens the farmers livelihood. These ideas probably reflected the social condition of Zoroaster's time and country, when there was a transition from the nomadic to the pastoral life. The deeva-worshippers would then represent band of nomadic raiders, and the new purified would be a means of cementing a settled, pastoral fabric of society." (Ibid., p. 281). This amply shows the social aspect of religion.

THE HINDU CONCEPT OF SIN

The Pathway of Good and Evil

"A concept appearing frequently in Vedic literature which, it is suggested, illustrates a degree of moral awareness; and which contributes to the Vedic concept of sin, is that which is portrayed in the similes in which the action of one's life are likened to a 'pathway'. The prayer is sometime offered which expresses to the Deity

the desire that the good pathway might be known to the one praying" (George Reos Jensen: Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis entitled The Hindu Concept of Sin kept at Delhi University Library, (cf. Lead me to the path of good from the path of evil; transfer me from darkness to illumination).

In Upnishad evil is something negative. It is not intended in the creation but it is the negative of good as negation of light is darkness. Upnishad says that originally there was only Atman or Brahman. It was the Supreme Unity. At some stage it desired to be many. Hence it manifested itself into many and hence the world. First of all the Atman manifested in the form of Mahat (like Nous of Platonism) and then out of Mahat came Ahankar (ego); out of Ahankar came Manas (mind); on the other hand came five Tan Mantras and out of those the five Bhutas -- the Sky, the Air, the Light, the Water and the Earth.

It is owing to the separatist tendency that we have hatred towards others and fear of others. If this separatist tendency is done away with, all will be Brahman. In diversity there is evil and good but in unity (i.e., Brahman) there is none since unity is beyond good and evil. In the diversity what is harmonious is good and what is discordant is evil. Exclusive diversity is perceptible (visible) owing to ignorance. If ignorance is removed, diversity is gone. Ignorance is something personal and not something universal. If an individual could understand the real purpose of the ultimate the feeling of suffering will change to good to him. This is the supreme Vedantic position.

But as per theory of Karma whatever evil is there it is not the creation of God or because of the 'ignorance', rather it is because of the cumulative effect of all the bad deeds of the inhabitants in their respective previous births, e.g., in a Mela (fair) there is Dhula (dust); but the organiser had not created this Dhula deliberately but it is because of the cumulative effect of all the individual striking the earth.

To Sankara evil is an illusion. He gives the examples of rope in the darkness -- it is inexplicable because in semi-darkness it will appear like a snake but when light is on, it is perceived as rope. Now the problem is what about the snake? Was it there previously or not? It was not physically present but it was present in conception. It is Maya (illusion). It is Ajnan (ignorance) and as such it defies definition. This is the source of all evil, in the sense, that it brings perversion or distortion in our knowledge of Brahman. This Maya has two-fold entity -- Avaran Shakti (power of covering) and Bikshep Shakti (power of projection). Sankara follows the Upanishadic version in opining that the element of Maya obscures or hides Brahman from the naked eye because otherwise the eye would have been dazzled and secondly the power of projection reveals itself in the manifestation of all these worldly objects -- but if the eye is Divine or Higher then it can stand the sight of Brahman. Plato also took a similar stand which in turn influenced Shelley profoundly.

This Vedanta of Sankara (beginning of 8th century A.D.) is the

most prominent of the versions of the Vedantic philosophy. It is only Sankara who has treated 'evil' so emphatically. But others (Ramanujam of 11th century being the most prominent of them) ^{have} ~~has~~ taken the stand that there is no Evil in the world -- to be more precise, there can be no Evil because the universe is the manifestation of Brahman and since Brahman is all good, there can be no place for Evil whatsoever. Evil has no cosmic entity -- it exists only in the individual mind because of the narrowness of the souls or Jeevas -- then the question arises as why this narrowness of the soul which is the part of Brahman. Ramanujam contends that this is owing to some deeds of their respective previous lives.

Sankara's is Monism (Advait), Ramanujam's is Qualified Monism (Vishistadvait) and Madhavacharya's is Dualism (Dvaitabad). Madhavacharya contends that world and soul are different from Brahman though they are dependant on Brahman but not vice versa. He further contends that Brahman is bereft of evil but the world and soul are full of evil because of the bad deed of the souls. In answering the question as to why did the first soul commit some evil deed, he says that since the universe has no beginning, there is no such thing as first evil. This is of course, an evading answer.

According to Sankhya there are two basic entities -- Prakriti and Purusha. Prakriti remains inactive, it is unconscious or ignorant, homogeneous or dormant whereas Purusha is multiple, knowledge, conscious heterogeneous. Normally before creation Prakriti and Purusha remain

separated but somehow (which Sankhya does not explain) when they come together the Prakriti is activated^{on} receiving the reflection of Purusha. Then comes Evil when the reflection claims to be the original (as in the case of a mirror the virtual image vies for the post-identity of original object) -- hence this suffering, pain and all sorts of evils. Thus the confusion between the original and the reflection is the source of evil. When this confusion (which is ignorance) is removed, evil is removed also.

Yoga is based on the metaphysical concept of Sankhya. About eradication of evil Sankhya says that the Purusha must be conscious of the fact that it is not bound by the reflection and there is no question of salvation. By being aware of the fact the Purusha can automatically get rid of this bondage and there can be no evil. But Yogins say something different. They opine that mere intellectual conviction won't do. We are to go to the root. The root is the psychic point of intermixture of Purusha and Prakriti where the consciousness of Purusha is intermixed with the unconsciousness of Prakriti and this intermixture is effected by mutual modifications. This process should not bring confusion between the consciousness of Purusha and the elements of Prakriti. Mental modifications are just waves on the water. If the waves are there reflections will not be visible. If these waves are subsided then the consciousness of Purusha will only be there and no intermixture of the elements of Prakriti. When this consciousness is constant this is Samadhi (unconscious consciousness) and through Samadhi one may get rid of the world and the evils.

, Yogin philosophy is the practical aspect of Sankhya's philosophy. They say that there is some middle point between the transcendental consciousness and the worldly sense -- the Samadhi consciousness and mental modifications -- separate the former from the latter, and there is Samadhi as free from all evil.

According to the Vaishnava (followers of Vishnu, the Lord who protects and rears the creatures. Vishnu is one of the three Gods of Hindu Trinity the other two being Brahma, the Lord of creation and Siva, the Lord of Destruction) cult absence of 'Love' is the root-cause of all evil and consequently Love is the panacea for all evils. The eternal union of Lord Krishna and Radha symbolizes the fusion of 'energy' and 'love' for the maintenance of the balance and equilibrium of creation.

According to Sri Aurebindo ignorance is the source of evil. Thus to him the whole world is not evil. The world is brought into being by Brahman (Satchidananda). Evil does not belong to Satchidananda though He is involved in evil. For Aurebindo Nescience means apparent ignorance and apparent non-existence. Originally there is no evil in Nescience (it being the creation of Satchidananda) but when Nescience develops into Energy, Energy into Matter, and Matter into Life, evil comes in, because Life is egoistic and self-centred. Owing to self-centredness it comes into conflict with Matter and other lives, it perverts the way of behaviour and thereby ushers in evil. Initially this evil is of very simple nature but where mind comes in, this evil gradually becomes mor

severe and complex. Later on when Super Mind will dawn (which is destined to dawn) suffering and evil will go. And if for the time being we are able to develop supra-mental consciousness there will be lesser evil and suffering. "Aurobindo explains the problem of the good and the evil solely in terms of harmony and discord. He does not believe in the creation of them by separate agencies. As the world is essentially Saccidanada, it cannot be viewed in terms of any fundamental polarity of the good and the evil. On the contrary, it should be explicable uniformly in terms of a single principle. Accordingly, he takes good and evil as positive and negative aspect of one and the same principle. He compares falsehood and evil to darkness, while truth and good to light. Just as darkness is mere absence of light, similarly falsehood and evil are absence of truth and goodness." ³

Buddhist theory of evil is Trishna (desire). Lord Buddha says that the world is evil and the root of the evil of the world lies in Trishna or desire. So if one can stop the desire the world will stop for him, i.e., the world will have no effect on him, i.e., the world will stop existing for him and he will enjoy Nirvana. As per Buddha there are twelve chains in the link of existence and this chain begins with 'Ignorance'. From 'Ignorance' arises 'Desire'; Desire is followed by Action (karma) and from Action we have Birth and Death and then re-birth. So in his view also evil is owing to ignorance.

3 S.P. Singh, Sri Aurobindo and Whitehead on the Nature of God :
Aligarh; 1972, p.129.

MUSLIM CONCEPT OF EVIL

Islam, which is the youngest and most codified of all major religions of the world, gave serious thought to the problem of evil and these thoughts are scattered all over the Holy Qoran. Since Christianity and Islam are both based upon Hebrew religion, it is no wonder that the treatment of evil in one has some similarities with that of the other. Unlike Hinduism, and like Christianity, Islam is monotheistic, its only and Supreme God being Allah (There is no God except Allah and Mohammd is His Messenger). Since Allah is the 'First Cause' and the 'Prime Mover' and anything is nothing but the manifestation of His loving personality, 'Evil', also owes its existence to Him. Faced with the dilemma as to how to account for the presence of evil in the scheme of His who is not only omnipotent but also all-loving, Islamic theology ^{does} ~~do~~ not try to solve the contradiction in a round-about way. On the other hand, it very categorically says that Allah himself created evil to test Man's sincerity and integrity. He deliberately placed evil as hurdles on the path of Man because He had not created Man as 'automation' having no choice or freedom of work; on the contrary, He gave full choice and volition to Man to choose between good and evil and act accordingly, notwithstanding His warnings about the calamities that would befall Man should he opt for evil ways:

By a soul and Him who balanced it,
And breathed into it its wickedness and its piety,
Blessed now is he who hath kept it pure,
and undone is he who hath corrupted it'.

(Holy Qoran, Sura XCI, 7-10, translated by J.M.Redwell
Everyman's Library, N.Y., 1971, p.36).

Islam does not treat evil as non-entity; on the other hand, it accepts the reality of evil and it urges the believers to beware of evil and to shun it. It takes into consideration various social and practical faces of evil such as usury, usurpation, lying, infidelity, cowardice, jealousy, hatred, stealing, profligacy and so on mentioning therein the punishment for the sinners.

CHRISTIAN CONCEPT OF EVIL

Of all the religions it is Christianity to which evil poses to be a great problem because the concept of Christian God is a bit different from that of Gods in other religions. The fact of evil constitutes the one most serious objection to the Christian belief in a God of Love. In the Christian theology God is supposed to be omnipotent and all-loving and He is supposed to have created everything ex nihilo. If He is all-loving He will not allow evil to exist and if He is all-powerful He could destroy evil. But evil exists. It is a grave challenge to the faith of any Christian -- "a challenge that was bitingly summed up in Stendhal's epigram 'The only excuse of God is that He does not exist'. The enigma of evil presents so massive and direct a threat to our faith that we are bound to seek within the resources of Christian thought for ways, if not of resolving it, at least of rendering it bearable by the Christian conscious."⁴ Hence we

4 John Hick, *op.cit.*, Preface.

are faced with the problem: "Can the presence of evil in the world be reconciled with the existence of a God who is unlimited both in goodness and power."⁵ The constant preoccupation of St. Augustine in the fifth century and Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century with the problem of evil betrays the malady of the "popular belief about the supposed monolithic certitude of the Ages of Faith."⁶

In English 'evil' is usually used in a comprehensive sense which comprises moral evil of wickedness and non-moral evils as disease and disaster. In German Ubel is a general term, covering both moral and non-moral evils, whilst Bese refers more definitely to moral evil. In French le mal can be used to refer to all types of evil. Moral evil is evil that we human beings originate: Cruel, unjust, vicious and perverse thoughts and deeds, Natural evil is the evil that originates independently of human actions: in disease, bacilli, earthquakes, storms, droughts, tornadoes, etc. In connection with these latter, it is a basic question whether events in Nature which do not directly touch mankind, such as the carnage of animal life, in which one species preys upon another, or the death and decay of plants, or the extinction of a star, are to be accounted as evils. Should evil be defined exclusively in terms of human actions and experiences, with the result that events in the natural universe or in the sub-human world do not as such raise question for theodicy? There is another kind of evil which is called 'metaphysical evil' and which phrase refers to the basic

5 Op. cit., p. 3.

6 Ibid.

fact of finitude and limitation within the created universe.

Now let us try to understand the answer of Christian theologians to the problem of evil. "The accepted name for the whole subject comprising the problem of evil and its attempted resolution is theodicy. From the Greek *theos*, God and *dike*, justice. The word is thus a technical shorthand for: the defence of the justice and righteousness of God in the face of the fact of evil."⁷ But there is also a serious objection. It is contended that the very notion of a theodicy is impious. "It is said to represent a foolish pretention of the human creature, under the illusion that he can judge God's act by human standards. Instead of seeking to justify the ways of God to man we should rather be trying to justify the sinful ways of man to God."⁸

Monism and Dualism represent the only two wholly consistent solutions that are possible; and unfortunately neither of them is compatible with the basic claims of Christian theology. Monism, the philosophical view that the universe forms an ultimate harmonious unity, suggests the theodicy that evil is only apparent and would be recognised as good if we could but see it in its full cosmic content. Dualism is a theodicy, on the other hand, rejects this final harmony, insisting that good and evil are utterly and irreconcilably opposed to one another and that their duality can be overcome only by one destroying the other.

7 Ibid., p. 6.

8 Ibid., pp. 6-7.

The monistic philosophy of Spinoza finds expression in a formal metaphysical system. He saw reality as forming a perfect whole -- that every thing within it follows from the eternal divine nature -- "and saw each finite thing as making its own proper contribution to the infinite perfection. Thus every existing thing occupies a place within the system of universal perfection, and our human notion of evil as that which ought not to be is merely an illusion of our finite perspective."⁹ "Nothing, then is contingent, but all things are determined from the necessity of the divine nature to exist and to act in a certain manner."¹⁰ Only God is free since He is not determined by anything outside Himself. "It clearly follows from what we have said, that things have been brought into being by God in the highest perfection."¹¹ Extending this doctrine Spinoza says "good and evil are not objective realities (entia realia) but mental entities (entia rationis), formed by comparing things either in respect of their conformity to a general idea or merely in respect of their utility to ourselves."¹² But Spinoza says that this approach is wrong because there are no general norms, like unchanging Platonic ideas, to diverge from which is ipso facto to be imperfect. Thus a shrivelled tree, a lame ass, a diseased tiger, or a sinful man are regarded as defective specimens of their respective species. But God did not create eternal

9 Ibid., p. 23.

10 Spinoza's Ethics, (trans. R.H.M. Elwes, Bohn's Philosophical Library, London, I, 29).

11 Ibid., I, 33, n. 2.

12 John Hick, op.cit., p. 25.

ideas of Tree, Ass, Tiger or Man but only the many particular trees, asses, tigers and men each of which is its own distinct and unique self. And behind the other type of comparison as to the usefulness of things to ourselves the human mind suffers from another delusion that everything in nature obeys a purpose and works towards some end. But in reality that does not seem to be true.

EVIL AS PRIVATIO BONI

Among the Christian theologians trying to understand the problem of evil purely from the standpoint of a devoted Christian, the first name to be mentioned should be that of St. Augustine. Initially Augustine was not a Christian; he was a follower of that eclectic faith, founded by Mani (215 A.D. - 276 A.D.), about a century and half earlier, which was known as Manichaeism. This faith dealt directly and explicitly with the problem of evil, affirming an ultimate dualism of good and evil, light and darkness. Augustine denounced Manichaeism and accepted Christianity because Manichaean portrayal of God as less than absolute appeared to him to be dangerously mistaken. Though his Christian faith led him to believe that there could be no evil or possibility of evil in God himself, even then his earlier subscription to Manichaean faith enabled him to probe deeply into the problem of evil with unique detached attachment and non-involved involvement.

As to the problem what is evil and how does it come to be he is

never an escapist in finding an answer. He does not deny the existence of evil nor does he minimize its virulence. He opines that evil exists and it is to be feared but asks whether that is evil which we fear or the act of fearing is in itself evil.

Augustine accepts the reality of evil and on the other hand, like a devoted Christian, he believes God to be Omnipotent and all-loving and to solve this apparent dilemma he turns to Neo-Platonism which is based on the writings of Plotinus (A.D. 204-270) and is supposed to be Platonism diluted with oriental mysticism. Plotinus's philosophy is that evil represents the dead-end of the creative process in which the Supreme-Being has poured out its abundance into innumerable forms of existence, descending in the degrees of being and goodness until its creativity is exhausted and the vast realm of being borders upon the empty darkness of non-being.

"Given that the God is not the only existent thing, it is inevitable that, by the outgoing from it, or if the phrase be preferred, the continuous down-going or away-going from it, there should be produced a last -- something after which nothing more can be produced: This will be Evil... This last is Matter, the thing that has no residue of good in it; here is the necessity of Evil."¹³

Augustine's most frequent phrase to define evil is privatio boni, 'privation of good'. By privation of good Augustine never means a

13 Enneads, trans. Stephen Mackenne; London, Faber and Faber Ltd.: 1962; I, 8.7.

simple lack of goodness, in the sense in which a tree, for example, lacks the spiritual qualities of an angel. It is not an evil to have been created as a lesser rather than a greater good -- as a worm, for example, instead of a dog, or a dog instead of a man. For according to the principle of plenitude, there is positive value in the existence of less exalted as well as more exalted forms of creaturely being in a well-ordered scale. Evil enters in only when some member of the universal kingdom, whether high or low in the hierarchy, renounces its proper role in the divine scheme and ceases to be what it is meant to be.

When such malfunctioning occurs it cannot be said to exist as a separate entity; it is on the contrary, the absence of proper being in a creature. "Thus evil has no positive nature; but the less of good has received the name evil'. Evil is negative, a lack, a loss, a privation."¹⁴

The only other prominent figure among Christian theologians working for a theodicy is Saint Thomas Aquinas (1226-1274 A.D.). Thomas Aquinas wrote profusely about the problem of evil but he did so in an abstract and detached manner. He did not make any positive shift from the stand of Augustine, rather he simply tried to improve upon the latter. Unlike Augustine, Thomas Aquinas divided evils into those affecting 'voluntary things'(i.e., angels and men) and those affecting

14 John Hick: op.cit., p. 53.

the rest of the creation. St. Thomas opined that in spite of the involvement of God in the process of creation, it cannot be inferred that the Universe is perfect in the sense that God could not, had He wished, have made a better one. This is a fundamental stand of the Augustinian-Thomist theodicy that although this world is a product of infinite goodness and power, its maker could, if He had wished, have created better worlds. Deviating from this tradition, Leibnitz believed that an omnipotent and infinite good Being, in creating a world, could make only the best that is possible. Though God is perfect, the matter with which He had to create this world was not perfect and hence He had to remain satisfied by creating the best that could be created out of those stuff and definitely it was not the best'.

Another deep probe into the reality of evil was made by the mystics all over the world. As mysticism is, as defined by R.L. Nettleship "the belief that everything in being what it is, is symbolic of something more", the problem of evil has too-deep a symbolical connotation with the mystics. For Plato, who is popularly called 'Father of Mysticism', Evil had unique symbolical overtones. Plato was of the opinion that the visible world was an illusion, being an imperfect imitation of the perfect form which is in the kingdom of God. Every visible object in the world is a second-rate copy of the perfect 'original' of that particular type which is in Heaven. Hence for Plato evil has no entity, being an illusion. Plato's stand is very much akin to that of Sankaracharya, the Vedantic philosopher, who also treated the external

world as mere illusion. But Plato believed in 'dualistic' philosophy, the two cardinal entities for him being 'Idea' and 'Matter'. The world of 'Ideas' and what Aristotle called 'Platonic Matters' exist independently of each other according to Plato's belief. Plato further opines that Idea is real, Matter is unreal. Ideas exist in and for themselves; they have the character of substantiality: They are real, universal forms, they are the original, eternal, transcendent, archetype of things. They exist prior to things, apart from them and independently of them and are uninfluenced by the changes which things undergo. They are good.

Matter, on the contrary, is the substratum of the world of sense, nature. On this the world of ideas impresses its forms. Unimpressed by the ideas, matter is devoid of all qualities. It is formless, indefinable and imperceptible. It is evil.

The greatest of the modern Jewish mystics, Martin Buber, made a penetrating search into the problem of evil and he has something original to say. He opines that to a man the world is two fold as his attitude is two fold depending on the twofold nature of the primary words which he speaks. There are two combinations of primary words: "I-Then" and "I-It". Hence the 'I' of man is also twofold because the 'I' of the primary word 'I-Then' is different from the 'I' of the primary word 'I-It'. Primary words do not signify things, but they intimate relations. Primary words do not describe something that might exist independently of them, but being spoken they bring about

existence. There is one significant difference between these two primary words: The primary word 'I-Thou' can only be spoken with the whole being; the primary word 'I-It' can never be spoken with the whole being.

"Just as the melody is not made up of notes nor the verse of words nor the statue of lives, but they must be tugged and dragged till their unity has been scattered into these many pieces, so with the man to whom I say thou: I can take out from him the colour of his hair, or of his speech, or of his goodness. I must continually do this. But each time I do it, it ceases to be thou."

"And just as prayer is not in time but time in prayer, sacrifice not in space but space in sacrifice, and to reverse the relation is to abolish the reality, so with the man to whom I say 'Thou'."¹⁵ Apparently in a very round-about way Martin Buber tries to establish that the relational approach, i.e., 'I-Thou' is good and the other word, i.e., when one is wholly immersed in 'I-It', that stage is evil.

Karl

~~Karl~~ Marx defines 'evil' from a different standpoint. In his system economical aspect of one's life is very important and the mode of production is of vital importance as it places different types of people at different places of society. For Marx, Exploitation is evil.

To 'matter' Marx gives the position of importance and he relegates 'ideas' to secondary position. His system is known as

15 I and Thou, by Martin Buber, trans. by Ronald Gregor Smith: Edinburgh: T & T.Clark., 1937, pp. 7-8.

'Dialectical Materialism'. In his historical analysis of the progress of man, Marx observes that mankind has progressed and evolved through dialectics and through class-conflict and class struggle. In the primitive time there was no class system and that period is called primitive communism when mankind collectively fought ^{against} ~~against~~ the odd circumstances of nature for food and shelter. Then came the slave-system when one kind of people started living idly on the fruits of the labour of the other kind; the former was known as 'Exploiter' and the latter 'exploited'. With the passage of time came 'Feudal System' as the earlier slave system failed to cope with fast-developing problems of the complex and complicated human societies. In this system the feudal lords flourished usurping the fruits of the labours of the exploited serfs. In the third stage there is capitalism; here the exploited persons are the members of the labourer class who have nothing to sell except their labour. The fourth stage is socialism which means an end of exploitation. In this system one will work as per his capacity and will earn as per his work. Socialism will ultimately lead to Communism which ensures that every one will work as per his or her capacity and will get as per his or her need. When Communism will be attained on a global scale, there will be no exploitation and there will be no subjective evil. Then all the machineries of oppression and coercion such as prison, torture-cell, police, army will be unnecessary and then 'Control over matter' will only be needed and no 'control over man'.

Chapter - II

SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS EVIL IN 18TH CENTURY ENGLAND AND FRANCE

So profound was the impact of the French thought on English society and politics during the closing decade of the eighteenth and the first three decades of the nineteenth century that any critical assessment of the latter will be incomplete and inadequate without a survey of the contemporary French life and thought. The drift of the English literary movements in the first thirty years of the nineteenth century was partly determined and conditioned by the French Revolution. Referring to the impact of the French Revolution on British thought, Cole says that it "did two things. It gave British Radicals - a philosophy; and it caused the governing classes to adopt a repressive policy, which for a generation, kept all forms of Radicalism firmly in check."¹

Social Evils: Since literature reflects the spirit of an age, the low ebb of the moral tone in the literature of the closing decades of the seventeenth century and beginning of the eighteenth is a pointer to the immoral order of the day. The Restoration comedy is ^{^a} the typical example of the obscenity and the immorality prevailing at the court and at the theatre. This trend continued throughout the eighteenth century though the writers were toying with the ideas of morals and manners, moderation and good sense. Beneath the surface of order and decency there flowed the

1 G.D.M. Cole, A Short History of the British Working Class Movement: London; 1937, p. 44.

undercurrent of profligacy and flippancy. Speaking of the moral values of the then England Routh rightly points out: "They followed the old fashion of ostentation and self abandonment, fighting duels on points of honour, vying with each other with quips and raillery, posing as atheists and jeering at sacred things, love making with extravagant odes and compliments, applauding immoral plays, while the more violent, the 'gulls' and the 'roarers' roamed through the town in search of victims to outrage or assault."²

Though initially rampant mainly amongst the aristocracy, these vices gradually made an inroad into the life of middle-class people owing to the earnest bid of the latter to imitate the ways and manners of the former. But the common masses remained mostly immune to the contamination of these vices not because they thoroughly disapproved of it but because they had little money and lesser leisure to pursue the ways of the high-ups. As such the glamour, wealth and its accessories became the source of stimulus as much as the object of contempt and satire for the writers of the age mostly belonging to the middle stratum of eighteenth century England.

In France, the society followed suit of the Regent; and the fops roamed about in search of coquettes "gay colours, light fabrics, and swinging hoops and panniers copied from the robes of bourgeois and

2 H.V. Routh, Styl and Addison : The History of English Literature; Vol. IX, p. 26.

conquettes" says Cobban, "brought lighter modes and manners with a franker indifference to morals into high society."³ He further says that the gloomy side of the eighteenth century French society "that world of rogues and adventurers in which no man is honest and no woman virtuous..."⁴ has been reflected in the satire of that age.

In England the nobility comprised Dukes, Earls, and Barons. "At the top of social hierarchy stood the Dukes, who would in any other land be styled princes, and whose manner of life outdid in magnificence the courts of allied monarchs drawing England's pay."⁵ They pursued women of easy morals and virtues and generally quenched their thirsts with wine. They spent their nights in gambling and their days at stake in stocks, cards and lottery tickets. Horse-riding, fox-hunting and woman-chasing were their favourite sports and pastimes. The nobility had monopoly in almost all walks of national life remaining the virtual rulers of the country having their sway both in the urban and in the rural areas. They were the self-appointed custodians of law, order and justice. In the word of Leslie Stephen "There were no troublesome people with philanthropic or religious nostrums, proposing to turn the world upside down and induce an improptu millennium."⁶

3 A. Cobban, A History of Modern France; London; 1968, Vol. V, p. 19.

4 Ibid.

5 G.M. Travelyn, English Social History; London; 1962, p. 306.

6 Leslie Stephen, English Literature and Society in the Eighteenth Century; London; 1947, p. 97.

About the middle of the eighteenth century in England the middle-class began to cherish a feeling of reformation in satire, ridiculing the outmoded fashions and ways of gallantry and self-indulgence. Social reformers like Wesley and others were spreading the message of 'malice towards none and charity towards all'. They also translated their doctrines into action and tried to help the underdogs often at the risk of their lives. Mary Wollstonecraft championed the cause of the subjugated women against the tyranny of men. Moreover, "a fairly constant endeavour to break away from 'classic' restraints in the name of national tradition and individual freedom"⁷ made the nobility realise that a compromise with the middle class could cool down the latter's enthusiasm for reform. But in France the intellectuals paid more attention to political reforms than to social amelioration and the reformatory activities could not produce the desired results within the social framework of the day, because, the Nobility, enjoying unlimited powers, was too arrogant to be amenable to any kind of social reform.

By the end of a decade of hostilities between England and France (war of the Spanish succession 1702-12), the merchants, politicians, engineers, doctors, lawyers, and contractors, formed a strong middle class next to the nobility and saw to it that they were hailed as gentlemen in eighteenth century England and France. They utilized this conflict to amass sufficient wealth to sustain their descendants for generations to come. Aspiring to attain the status of the nobility, they

7 Cane Briwton, The Political Ideas of the English Romantics; New York; 1962, p. 19.

initiated a campaign for intermarriages with the aristocracy thereby unconsciously exposing themselves to the contamination of the vices of the nobility. It tended to erode the social image of the nobility and the citizen class "lived in equal state, built as grandly and spent as prodigiously on furniture, food and servants."⁸

In England the masters were empowered to inflict savage punishments on the labourers deliberately shirking all moral responsibilities to look into the miserable conditions of the workers. Plumb points out that "the workers were dependent on their masters for their houses, their shops, their taverns, their schools, their chappels. It was easy for the masters to discipline the recalcitrant and the complaining, to repress signs of political consciousness and political organisations."⁹ The life of an average worker was a brief one of toil, hunger, disease and dirt, with the oblivion of drunkenness as the main relief. They lived in the houses of the rich wherein pigs, horses, and fowls inhabited, while the peasants lived in hovels, made of weather board, and dockers and the unskilled labourers had to live in "the most filthy conditions of overcrowding, without sanitation, police or doctors, and far beyond the range of philanthropy, education and religion."¹⁰

The problem of over-population added to the misery of the poor in England. The number of vagabonds and beggars increased and for want of employment opportunity they often took resort to violence and

8 J.H.Plumb, England in the Eighteenth Century: London, 1963, p.14.

9 *ibid.*, p. 145.

10 G.N. Travelyn, *op. cit.*, p. 331.

anti-social activities. Consequently even for petty offences severest possible punishments were meted out to the criminals. To save their lives the poor often let their children die and mothers left their illegitimate off-springs on the streets to avoid expenses and shame.

The peasants were still more hard hit. They had to pay several taxes levied by different arbitrary authorities, and had to work extra hours to oblige their masters, Lords, and the rulers by turn. In short, by no stretch of imagination could their living be considered befitting a human being.

Administration and the Law: During the eighteenth century, England did not experience drastic social changes and upheavals. Property and privileges were taken for granted, orthodox and tyrannical attitudes of the rulers were not questioned and consequently the movements for social reforms were thoroughly discouraged and easily suppressed. This encouraged the Government to take recourse to various measures for the maintenance of social order. "Party government had to be carried on by methods which involve various degrees of jobbery and bribery."¹¹

Corruption had already made a thorough inroad in the administrative hierarchy in England. Speaking of Walpole's administration, Butt points out that it "was favourable for the spread of corruption in all walks of life."¹² The justices were known as 'trading justices' whose main concern was to utilize their positions for earning money by means

11 Leslie Stephen, op.cit., p.99.

12 John Butt, The Augustan Age : London; 1965, p.69.

fair or foul. The corrupt politicians and administrators got a boost owing to the extended hand of friendship of the selfish merchants who deemed the situation very congenial to fulfil their nefarious design of thriving at the common man's cost.

Parliament continued to add statute after statute to the repressive code of English law. Justice was reduced to mockery when petty offences such as stealing of sheep or cow were capital crimes. And often the law was so ambiguous that it was very easy for a cunning offender to avert punishment. "Out of six thieves brought to trial", says Trevelyan, "five might in one way or other get off, while the unlucky one was hanged."¹³

For the absence of any representative assembly or a written constitution the condition in France was still more precarious. Since she had not even code of laws either for civil or criminal cases, the royal pleasure or the loose body of traditions and conventions were characteristically misnamed the fundamental laws of kingdom. The unusual delay and the corrupt practices of the counts made the saying, 'Justice delayed is justice denied' ironical. The magistrates who posed to be 'the father of the nation' used to examine the accused privately without the presence of any third person, hear the witness secretly, and award arbitrary and whimsical punishments often on the basis of statements derived from the accused under inhuman torture. In France law was what the judge said.

Political Evils : In spite of some efforts to democratize English polity,

¹³ G.W. Trevelyan, op. cit., p. 348.

the powers of the House of Lords could not be curtailed to any appreciable extent before the end of the nineteenth century. But in France, the political life of the people was different from that of their counterpart in England; an absolute monarch was the supreme head of all political authority, there being no constitution, no parliament, no responsible ministry. However, there was, for the sake of name, the Assembly which consisted of three 'estates' representing the clergy, the nobility and the common people. The king was omnipotent and all in one, holding the powers of the legislative, the executive, and the judiciary. It is significant to note that while England settled down politically to a period of comparative calm and peace, France was "practically concerned with the question of the right to rebel and to overthrow established order."¹⁴

The degeneration of the French Monarchy, the rise of the privileged classes, and the complete breakdown of the administrative machinery helped the intelligentsia and prompted the common people to make a seathing criticism of the existing social order. The French writers, politicians, philosophers and reformers worked out the inevitability of the revolution but unfortunately, the leadership went to the bourgeoisie who seized upon this opportunity to rectify, redress and remedy the ills in accordance with their own interests. Its move was two fold: one dealing with the "problems of amelioration in the social, economic and administrative activities of governments"¹⁵ and the other paying attention primarily to

14 Phillis Doyle, A History of Political Thought: London, 1961, p.200.

15 W.A. Dunning, A History of Political Theories-Rousseau to Spencer: India; 1966, p. 46.

the "more strictly political problems touching the form, organisations and limits of governmental authority itself."¹⁶

Though there were political 'factions' in England before 1689, they were not political parties in the modern sense of the word. It was in the eighteenth century that the 'Whig' and 'Tory' parties became sharply divided to be established as political parties, though, in fact, the difference was simply superficial, as both the parties championed the cause of the monarchical and aristocratic tradition of England. The difference centred round personalities rather than rested upon principles.

In France long before the revolution, there existed two diametrically opposite groups, or parties -- one opposing and the other supporting the revolution. The right-wing party was Girondins -- the party of the upper clergy and the nobles which naturally opposed every reformation measure in society and politics. The left wing, rather the left of the centre party, the Montagnards, represented the middle classes who favoured a new constitution. Like Whig and Tory, these two French political parties also stood for monarchical and conservative form of government. But by November 1789, another party consisting of small groups of extreme patriots and revolutionists came into being. Without any name, any political programme, any party funds this small group of extremists was opposed to all traditional institution of society; they professed to voice the feelings of the masses and became supporters of the revolution.

The response of the masses to the leftists' appeal was not so enthusiastic in England as it was in France. The result was that the French people made an epoch-making Revolution in 1789 while the English people, on the contrary, continued to acknowledge and honour the traditional supremacy of the King. Naturally, the King's household became the centre of all political activities. The King was the supreme powerful being who could appoint and dismiss even ministers at his sweet will. It made patronage-hunting a special branch of social activity. Naturally greatest shares of the social privileges came down to them who were experts in the art of 'licking above and kicking below'. Though the Industrial Revolution had contributed towards transforming the social order, the old aristocratic class headed by the King could retain power for all practical purposes. It could retain power also because of the fact that threat from the rapidly rising commercial class was still not very intense because the latter itself was not then in a position to straightway challenge the supremacy of the King and snatch political power from the aristocrats.

The greatest weakness of the limited democracy was manifest in the representation to Parliament which was wholly based on the strength of property and consequently the gentry of England, forming and leading most of the political parties, called for some immediate change in the social and political structures. Strangely enough the Tory party, 'clung to the hierarchical and aristocratic notion of the society, later to be embodied in the mid-Victorian doctrine of "the rich man in

his castle, the peer man at his gate."¹⁷ But in France, thinkers and political leaders rejected the supremacy of the King, opposed royal despotism and prepared the masses subjectively for the sweeping reforms that were in the offing. The objective situation was already ripe for the revolution, the misery of the common man having reached the acme, the only lacuna being the subjective preparation, which was uniquely completed by a galaxy of French thinkers on all walks of life.

Parliament and Election

Corruption in Parliamentary system and its affairs was a great evil of eighteenth century England. Even Edmund Burke who advocated supremacy of the English Constitution, saw no necessity for parliamentary reforms. The Whigs, idealized parliament, failed to realize the simple fact that legislators elected by only 'forty-shilling' free holders in the counties and small oligarchies in the towns, could, by no stretch of imagination, be supposed to be reflecting national interests and majority opinions. The corrupt political life of Augustan England was manifest in elections. The elections to the House of Commons was virtually the prerogatives of the justices of peace, aristocracy, landed gentry and the clergy. Naturally endless intrigues and malpractices were rampant during elections. In fact, often Whig and Tory did sort out some compromise formula of returning one member by the Whig aristocracy and other by the Tory gentry. Generally, the rich landlords contested a seat in the House of Commons by virtue of their potentiality of mustering

17 David Thomson, England in the Nineteenth Century: London, 1967, p. 23.

the support of the voters through fear and favour. Reasonably the voters trusted the vote as a property right and sold it to the highest bidder or gave it to the traditional land-owner. Consequently, the Parliament became the representative of property, and not of the people. And the British democracy distorted the notion of the Great American Abraham Lincoln and could well be defined as government of the people, and for the people to 'buy' the people.

The counties were also not free from these evils. Even in politically conscious counties the rival groups did not fight with political ideologies, rather they banked upon great and influential families to gain votes and they "rode to the poll at the head of cavalcade of gentry and yeomen, their hats streaming with ribbons of yellow or blue."¹⁸

Appointments to the offices were not held through free and fair competition but through the mercy of those who were at the helm of affairs of the state. Hence members immediately after being returned to the Parliament, converged their respective time and energies in sucking the State's Exchequer and providing places, pensions, jobs and contracts to their relatives and favourites. These, in turns, helped the members to get re-elected with the active help and support of those whom they had generously favoured. Thus a vicious circle was formed and consequently corruption and nepotism became the orders of the day.

In France, a legislative assembly was wholly alien to its

18 G.N. Trevelyn, British History in Nineteenth Century and After : London: 1965, p. 35.

tradition of absolute monarchy. There were States-General who could be suspended or even dismissed by the authority of the King, who was supreme under the sun. The formation of the assembly of the States-General, a cumbrous and anachronistic body without organisation, without executive authority, without experience of affairs, blocked every fruitful avenue of constitutional reform. The autocracy succeeded in thwarting any effective reform in France. The rights of the under-privileged Frenchmen were rendered meaningless. Local governments were under the firm control of the central administration and consequently non-execution of work, intra-governmental and inter-governmental strife and red-tapism were much in vogue.

The state of affairs could not go uncriticised for a long time. The writings of Voltaire, Rousseau, Helvetius, D'Holbach and others made the middle-class "conscious both of their grievances and of their powers and they supplied a new basis of authority in their doctrines of civil liberty and constitutional self-government."¹⁹

Religious Evils: In eighteenth century England moral values had reached a low ebb and corruption was rampant in the spheres of religion and the church. The church had lost much of its sanctities and become an unsequestered place, contaminated by political virus and turned into a cesspool of impious and unholy activities. The bishops had virtually stepped into the shoes of the politicians in utter disregard to their

19 Leo Greshoy, The French Revolution and Napoleon: India, 1960, p.79.

sacred profession. There was a gulf of difference between the 'preachings' and the 'practices' of the Church, preaching morality and practising immorality and flippancy; preaching virtue but practically ignoring Christianity that sustains virtue. There were double contradictions in them in not practising what they preached and not preaching what they practised. Religion was then only a tool to defraud people; moral life was commercialized to secure a place in heaven. The whole drama of Christianity -- sin and redemption, was relegated to the background and the Church entered into an unholy alliance with the aristocracy and shielded with spiritual bluffs and blessings the nefarious activities of the latter. Therefore, "it was natural that an aristocratic, unreforming, individualistic 'classical age should be served by a Church with the same qualities and defects as the other chartered institutions of the country."²⁰

In France the clergy exercised an extraordinary influence in governmental administration because the Church enjoyed a vast civil authority. It kept many public registers and maintained all records of baptism, marriage, and death in the kingdom. Intra-Church relation was not congenial: the senior clergy treated the junior with arrogant big-brotherly attitude; the junior often treated the senior with open disregard. The lower clergy was much more sincere than its upper counterpart, and unlike the latter, they had intimate contact with the masses and privileges and pleasures were not their only obsessions.

20 G.M. Travelyn, op.cit., p.358.

Instead of performing their religious obligations, the upper clergy took pleasure and passed time in playing cards with nobles, drinking wine and chasing women. To them religion was a pander to luxurious and libidinous living.

Thus the church was not the least free from the evils of society and often the corrupt clergy was more harmful because of the fact that they could, to a great extent, hide their ugly faces, under religious garment and could confuse the common man by covering their ill motives with divine sanction.

Social and Political Philosophy: Most pestilential aspect of the early eighteenth century social and political philosophy, like that of theology, was that which maintained the status quo in both social and political order. The underlying idea of 'whatever is, is right', emanated from a complacent and conservative thought. The wealthy were allowed to suck the juice while the poor were "contented with the lot to which an inscrutable providence had fortunately assigned them, or else consoled themselves, as they were advised to do by the clergy and moralists, with thoughts of the future life."²¹ The existing social order was taken to be established by God and hence beyond questioning. It was argued to be God's desire that the animal should enjoy their ignorant bliss and that the poor should be satisfied with their inferior way of life. It was in conformity with this view of life, God, creation and society that Alexander Pope wrote:

21 Basil Willey, The Eighteenth Century Background: London, 1965, p.45.

'Know then thyself, presume not God to scan,
The proper study of mankind is man.'

To scan God, to justify the ways of God to man or even to aspire to understand God's way to man was supposed to be presumptuous and audacious. Only to study man, and that too, not the man of flesh and blood, who lives, feels, hopes, thinks, and suffers, but the aerie, the ethereal man -- the man in abstraction. And what more, even the sufferings of the individuals were supposed to be necessary for universal happiness. The earlier belief 'immediate evil, ultimate good', was also the belief of the day. Poverty and sufferings of the under-dogs and all evils of the society were regarded as must for the ultimate benefit of mankind as a whole from the Divine point of view. Any serious probe into the root cause of sufferings and social evils were thoroughly discouraged as unholy and blasphemous, because universe, being the creation of the omnipotent and all-loving God, must be the best possible and any solution to the problem of evil must be worse than evil itself. This trend continued till the middle of the eighteenth century.

Similarly in political philosophy, the royal supremacy was vindicated, king being supposed to be the Divinely chosen head of the state; he was claimed to be the sole discernor of good and evil, justice and injustice, for his whole realm. The earlier philosophy of the 'divine right' prevailed till the middle of the eighteenth century. James I proclaimed: "The kings are not only god's lieutenants on earth and sit upon god's thrones but even by god himself they are called

Gods."²²

By the middle of the eighteenth century there came a change in the political thought. Materialists like Locke and idealists like Berkeley played a vital role in shaping the philosophy of the age. Locke and Hobbes employed the new philosophy of materialism in explaining the laws of Nature. Religion was now mostly based on Nature which had rested on Revelation during the Christian centuries. Hobbes bitterly attacked the church and ridiculed the so-called spiritualism. Locke discovered the origin of ideas in human experience, which is the source of all knowledge. From the view point of this Materialism, the world was a great machine. 'Necessity' and 'Association' were held together by the various phenomena of Nature, and the function of the scientists was to unravel its mysteries and hidden laws. Rousseau and Voltaire, Greatest intellectual mechanics behind the French Revolution, were influenced by the Materialism of Locke and Hobbes and later on influenced among others, William Godwin, William Wordsworth and Percy Bysshe Shelley.

The social philosophy of Augustan England was conservative embodying love for 'order'. Perceiving 'order' in the realm of Nature the writers and thinkers were led to look for the same in society. Alexander Pope, the best exponent of Augustan optimism stressed only 'order' both in 'Nature' and in 'Man' for order was the 'first' law of Heaven.

The general order, since the whole began,
Is kept in Nature, and is kept in Man.
: An Essay on Man, Epistle I, 171-72.

22 I. James, The Political Works, ed. C.H. McIlwain, Cambridge, 1918, p.307.

The French Philosophy of the eighteenth century was a literary philosophy written for the educated. It served as an excellent medium of propaganda for the exposure of monarchical despotism and ecclesiastical tyranny. A class consciousness and a sense of exploitation coloured the whole fabric of the political philosophy. The grip of the Church was being constantly loosened at the onslaught of new ideas put forward by Rousseau, Voltaire and others. The period from 1748 to 1770, therefore, marks the victory of the antireligion ideology, the thought of this stage being essentially practical. The promotion of human happiness was the yard-stick for gauging the utility of social and political institutions. The period was dominated by the gospel that pain was evil and pleasure good. The revolutionary social philosophy of the last decades of the eighteenth century helped a great deal to educate the masses to an awareness of the social, political, and religious evils. Though its impact could not produce in England a great revolution as in France, but it helped to create a group of radical thinkers in England.

Chapter - III

SOME OF THE THINKERS AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON SHELLEY

An unbiased study of the development of Shelley's thought and poetry reveals that his poetry is the blending of two main elements--thought and feeling. There is no denying the fact that feeling dominates thought in his lyrics but there is also a sizeable number of poems in which thought is more markedly predominant than lyricism and spontaneity. True that his genius was essentially lyrical and that it is discernible, in varying degrees, in almost all his poems but even then it will be quite improper to assume that lyricism is the only element of his poetry. On the other hand we may safely state that thought is the kernel of his poetry and that it plays an unmistakable part in shaping the colour, direction, tone and intensity of his feelings, because "Shelley uses poetry", remarks Spender "as a medium for expressing his ideas and his personal conflicts more than he exercises it as a craft or plays it as an intellectual game."¹

If we are to be guided by the unambiguous utterances of Shelley on the role of the poets, we immediately notice that he was intrinsically inclined to attach greater value to ideas than to feelings, because ideas have the unique singularity of providing the intellectual base for understanding the whole gamut of the doctrine of change and progress and of inspiring people for rejecting all that comes into conflict with the basic tenets. It is the sacred duty and the inspired mission of a poet having social vision to awaken consciousness in man and that is what

1 S. Spender, Shelley (Writers and their Works): Longman; 1964, p.45.

makes them "the unacknowledged legislators of the world."² Similarly his ideas of the nature and functions of poetry convincingly show that Shelley regarded poetry as an effective means of ushering in ^a new social, political and ethical order discarding the obsolete and hackneyed one. "The most unfailing herald, companion, and follower of the awakening of a great people to work a beneficial change in opinion or institution is poetry".³ Being socially conscious he was also convinced of the fact that poetry without thought cannot, under any circumstances, accomplish this noble task. Hence thought enjoys a place of paramount importance in Shelley's understanding of the real role of poets and poetry.

The importance of thought in Shelley's poetry can be assessed by his emphasis on the supremacy of political science over poetry: "I consider poetry very subordinate to moral or political science, and if I were well, certainly I should aspire to the latter."⁴ The opinion of Mary Shelley also corroborates this view when she says, "Shelley had no care for any of his poems that did not emanate from the depth of his mind, and develop some high or abstruse truth."⁵ This lends support to the claim that Shelley's poetry has real substance. Therefore, any attempt to eliminate, belittle, or ignore the thought-content will be

2 P.B. Shelley : A Defence of Poetry, ed. D.L.Clerk; Mexico; 1954, p.297.

3 *ibid.*

4 Shelley to Love Peacock; January 24, 1819; Vol.II, p. 71.

5 Mary Shelley: Note to Reginald and Helen: Political Works; ed. F.L. Jones, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman: 1947, p. 188.

tantamount to ignoring his poetry. Rogers has suggested that the correct approach to Shelley's poetry is to consider the importance of both thought and feeling. "Throughout Shelley's work in both prose and verse instinctive feeling and derivative thought -- the first coloured by the emotions arising out of experience and the second elaborated by a great deal of original invention -- are so closely interwoven that, beyond a certain point they defy disentanglement; all we can do -- and this precaution is always necessary in our studies -- is to allow for thought when we are considering feeling and for feeling when we are considering his thought."⁶

It was not owing to some accident or chance that Shelley became what he was. On the other hand he had solid background, both subjective and objective, to lay a modest claim to his seat of esteem. "He read much, and his reading gave purpose and unity and intensity to his natural characteristics an extreme sensitivity of imagination, a hatred of oppression and injustice and an overpowering impulse to self-expression."⁷

(A) JOHN LOCKE (1632-1704) was the initiator of the age of enlightenment and reason in England and France and is still a powerful influence on the life and thought of Europe. After a curious, successful and controversial service career, cut short owing to ill-health, he started writing his philosophical essays, among which his Essay Concerning

6 N. Rogers, Shelley at Work: Oxford; 1967, p.25.

7 Gerald McNiece, Shelley and the Revolutionary Idea. Harvard University Press; 1969, p. 42.

Human Understanding is perhaps the best and most well known. His medical training (though he did not go in for medical profession) helped him to a great extent to attain clear insight into and balanced approach in some of the most complicated and controversial issues of his time. His arguments were strongly logical and he attempted to show that all ideas were derived through sensory experiences. He thoroughly rejected the older theory of innate ideas and forcefully argued that even complex ideas arose through the interplay of sense and reflection. He opined that moral judgement was the result of voluntary action and consequently he was a strong defender of individual liberty; he advocated religious tolerance but vehemently opposed atheism. He did not subscribe to the view that one can know the truth about this universe by reason and he was of the opinion that knowledge of the world around us could only be gathered by experience and reflection on experience.

His most important work on political philosophy is that entitled Two Treatises of Government (1690). The first treaty which refuted the divine right of kings had a lasting effect on Shelley. In the second treaty he goes deeper and broods over the basic concept of a government. He is of the opinion that the act of governance is a contract and that governments should work 'for the public good'. He further says that the ruler's authority is conditional and not absolute and that government is a trust forfeited by a ruler who fails to secure the public good. He championed the cause of the freedom of men under governments and strongly declared that this freedom should not be subject to the inconstant, unknown arbitrary will of another man. As regards

the moral concept of good and evil his stand was hedonistic calling that good which is apt to cause or increase pleasure or diminish pain in human being.

here have shown the influence of Locke on Shelley's view of Evil

In Shelley the influence of Locke was deep-rooted. So great was his veneration for Locke that "the examination of a chapter of Locke's Essay Concerning Human Understanding would induce him, at any moment, to quit every other pursuit."⁸ Whenever Shelley wanted to convert any one to his philosophy and his own arguments seemed to be inadequate to him, he would refer him to the authority of Locke. "Locke was the systematic cudgel for blockheads."⁹ The very basis of Shelley's metaphysical speculations seems to be derived from Locke. Asserting that on Shelley the influence of Locke was greater than that of Godwin, Professor Sen states, "Even in his early youth, when the poet was practically in the leading strings of the philosopher, the empiricism of Lockian philosophy and its denunciation of wordy disputes made the enthusiastic admirer of Godwin sharply criticize his opinions."¹⁰ The reply¹¹ of Shelley to Godwin's stand that 'acquisition of classical learning is the proper employment of youth' is a pointer to Locke's influence on Shelley.

8 A Sen, Studies in Shelley : Calcutta University Press; 1936, p.9.

9 *ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

10 *ibid.*, p. 18.

11 "Words are the very things that so eminently contribute to the growth and establishment of prejudices. The learning of words before the mind is capable of attaching correspondent ideas to them, is like possessing machinery of which we are so unacquainted as to be in danger of misusing it." (Shelley to Godwin, January 29, 1812).

(B) VOLTAIRE (1694-1778). One of the pioneers of the French Revolution, Voltaire was the first thinker who popularised the ideas of Locke in France, propounded a theory of liberty and ardently pleaded for freedom in all its forms -- to speak, to write and to act. For him liberty was the panacea for all social and political ills and the mainspring of all progress and change. 'I may not believe in a single word of what you say but I will defend unto death your right to say so', declared he. His scathing attack on religion in general and Christianity in particular is, perhaps, the greatest contribution to the freedom of speech. But he was an atheist in the limited sense of the word, his violent attack on Christianity notwithstanding. He had faith in certain religious and moral values and he sincerely accepted a few fundamental principles of natural religion -- belief in a transcendental Deity and obedience to the moral precepts that are revealed to man through the faculty of his reason. Then what aspect of Christianity did he attack? He attacked "the dogmas, the accretions of theology, the complex mysteries and contradictory ceremonials of Christianity that had engendered fanaticism, caused bloodshed, suppressed reason and persecuted free thought."¹²

There was another apparent contradiction in Voltaire; while in one breath he condemned the monarchical form of government in France, in the next breath he praised England and its constitution. This becomes clear to us if we take note of the fact that Voltaire was less concerned

12 R.C.Sharma, The Socio-Political Thought of Shelley: Unpublished Thesis; Jiwaji University, 1970, p.31.

with the representative government but was more enthusiastic about the freedom of expression and religious tolerance. Secondly his love for and admiration of Newton's physics and Locke's material philosophy made him admire everything that England stood for. Voltaire's ideas concerning freedom and religion assumed a radical tone in France though these were taken favourably in conservative ideology of England. He had "an intense interest in the freedom of scholars and he was humane enough to be revolted by the stupidity and brutalities of France's criminal law."¹³ It can be said with emphasis that he played a very important part in preparing a favourable atmosphere for the Revolution. He attacked the evils of the Church and declared that the abolition of the ecclesiastical despotism was the beginning of the justice and enlightenment. He hated the old regime, denounced the abuses and the inequalities of laws and the judicial system of arbitrary imprisonment and torture, and undermined the respect for authority. His denunciation of religious intolerance and intellectual tyranny found echoes which reverberated throughout England. Shelley was greatly influenced by Voltaire; his criticism of the Church and the State is as bitter as that of the French thinker. In *Queen Mab* we hear the impassioned tones and echoes of the sardonic laughter of Voltaire. It is significant that Shelley introduced his *Queen Mab* with the words 'Ecrasex-L' Infame', taken from the correspondence of Voltaire.

(C) DAVID HUME (1711-1776) enjoys the unique distinction of conceiving

13 George H. Sabine, A History of Political Theory: London; 1959, p. 474.

philosophy as the inductive science of human nature. After a brief span of employment in a merchant's office, he retired to France for three years and there he composed A Treatise of Human Nature. But he met with utter frustration when he tried to publish it on his return to England. But fortunately, his very next venture, Essays, Moral and Philosophical (1741-42) won him success. In 1763 he reached France on a diplomatic assignment and was well-received by the society in Paris.

Hume's contention is that no theory of reality is possible and that ideas cannot be created. He discards the terms of metaphysics by declaring that all talk of a realm beyond experience has no content and that all objects of awareness are either 'relation of ideas' or 'matters of fact'. To him utility or usefulness means the fitness or natural tendency of anything to serve an end, if the end is regarded as good.

"There are obvious points of resemblance between Shelley's standpoint and that of Hume as expressed in his Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals; and we might have explained them away as due to the intellectual environment of the poet, if we had not known how eagerly Shelley read and re-read these Enquiries as embodied in the authentic editions of Hume's Essays. The letters of this youthful thinker specially during his residence at Oxford are replete with references to the doctrines and arguments of Hume and in several of them we can very clearly trace the influence of this philosopher's 'sceptical solutions' of doubts concerning the operations of the Human Understanding."¹⁴ Initially

14 A. Sen, Studies in Shelley; University of Calcutta, 1936, pp. 53-54.

Shelly was very much influenced by William Godwin's 'Political Justice'. But soon he could see the inherent contradiction in Godwin's standpoint and after a great deal of deliberate effort could free himself to a great extent from the influence of the latter. Stretching his own method of argument farther he soon came under the spell of the ideas propounded by Hume. "We may not find in his Speculations on Morals any definite or elaborate expansion of the part played by reason and emotion in forming our moral judgements. But the very way in which he defines virtue as involving not only 'the desire to be the author of good' but also 'the apprehension of the manner in which it ought to be done' shows the unmistakable influence of Hume."¹⁵

(D) J.J. ROUSSEAU (1712-1778), the chief brain behind the French Revolution, wielded tremendous influence on a galaxy of social and political thinkers, literateurs, social reformers and revolutionaries, both at home and abroad. He is universally acclaimed as the spiritual force behind the English Romantic Movement. The singular achievement of Rousseau lies in the fact that he compiled many apparently irrelevant ideas, corroborated them and after a process of deep mental thought gave vent to a stream of social and political ideas that inspired generations of thinkers and writers to higher and nobler thoughts. Being immensely conscious of the corrupting and crippling effects of civilisation, he stressed the supreme importance of simple and unsophisticated life lived in intimate contact with benign Nature and of

15 *ibid.*, p. 56.

emancipating man from the shackles of civilisation which bind, harden and debase him. His anti-sophistication zeal came to the fore when he declared that cities were the graveyards of men. Shelley's prejudices towards cities can be traced to the influence of Rousseau. In the opening lines of the third part of Peter Bell The Third he likens hell to the city of London when he says:

Hell is a city much like London
A populous and a smoky city;
There are all sorts of people undone,
And there is little or no fun done;
Small justice shown, and still less pity.

1 - 5

God made the country and man made the city. And since city is the creation of Man, the outcast, it is evil. The whole fabric of man-made institution is defective and vicious. In strong words Shelley exposes the cant and hypocrisy of the guardians of such institutions when he says in the same poem:

There is a Chancery Court; a king;
A manufacturing mob; a set
Of thieves who by themselves are sent
Similar thieves to represent
An army; and a public debt.
Which last in a scheme of paper money,
And means -- being interpreted --
"Bees, keep your wax -- give us the honey.

ibid. 16-23

The approach of Rousseau was unique and his manner singular. He believed in progress and in material method of improving the lot of men. He was ardent in eliminating various forms of evil -- corruption,

injustice, cruelty, misery and tyranny -- from the woof and texture of society. Rousseau could not reconcile to the degenerate state of man who reasonably should have been otherwise. Hence the significance of the opening sentence of the Social Contract -- 'Man is born free but everywhere he is in chains'. Many a man believes himself to be the master of others who is, no less than they, a slave. In the society of his dream only good would obtain; only virtuous citizen would flourish, and all would submit to general good. He discarded parliamentary democracy on the ground that representation is derived in a fraudulent manner. In his opinion, people think that they are free in democracy but in fact they are free at the time of general election only. Activities of modern political parties have not only vindicated Rousseau's stand but it has also stretched his point further. Now it is generally believed that in democracy people are not free, not even at the time of general elections.

In Rousseau's writing "the rise of the new epoch is very observable, for this most powerful writer abstains from those attacks on Christianity which unhappily had been too frequent, and exerted almost exclusively against the civil and political abuses of the existing society."¹⁶ In his essay -- Has the Progress of Science and Art Tended to Corrupt or purify morals? -- he argued that the virtue and happiness of the simple primitive man had been transformed into corruption and misery by the increase of knowledge, by the accumulation of wealth, by the growth of cities and luxuries. A.C. Ward considered him "the first of the moderns"

16 H.T. Buckle, History of Civilization in England; Longmans; 1908, Vol. II, p. 330.

to preach the importance of the individual person -- any individual person -- in relation to the community".¹⁷

Rousseau as an advocate of Naturalism constantly emphasised the supreme value of 'Return to Nature'. In his magnum opus - Social Contract -- an amazing and revolutionary tissue of the seventeenth century political theory and calvinist theology -- he formulated a new scheme for social salvation. He envisioned the world of an ideal society in which man can be free to follow the dictates of his spiritual being and to live happily in virtuous harmony with the purposes of Nature.

Rousseau was greatly concerned with the relation of the individual to the authority that governed him. He was aware of the fact that men in the then existing society had been deprived of their legitimate rights and liberties without their consent. The logical culmination of this line of thinking led him to formulate the revolutionary theory that the people are sovereign and the Governments derive their legitimate authority from the consent of all the governed.¹⁸ In fact it is an axiom of political

17 A.C.Ward, Landmarks in Western Literature: London; 1932, p.66.

18 We hear an echo of this in Tom Paine's Rights of Man and Shelley was very much influenced by this line of approach. So in the very beginning of his A Declaration of Rights (1812) he states "Government has no rights; it is a delegation from several individuals for the purpose of securing their own. It is therefore just only so far as it exists by their consent, useful only so far as it operates to their well-being" (Clause I). Shelley does not stop there. He boldly asserts in the very next lines, "If these individuals think that the form of government which they or their forefathers constituted is ill-adapted to produce their happiness, they have a right to change it" (ibid. Clause II). To make his stand very clear Shelly further states, "As the benefit of the governed is, or ought to be, the origin of government, no man can have any authority that does not expressly emanate from their will" (ibid., Clause II). The relation between the government and the governed should

(contd.)

democracy. But his greatest contribution to political speculation remains his doctrine of popular sovereignty which consists of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. He championed the cause of liberty which became so dear to the people of France of that period. It was he who said that to renounce liberty was to renounce being man.

Rousseau's influence on contemporary thought was tremendous. His political theories were readily received by British scholars and were immediately translated into English. It is no exaggeration to say that he offered a justification for abolishing the obsolete system of society and government. His works were the gospels for the enthusiasts of the French Revolution. Literally speaking, his disciples preached the gospel of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity in street corners and in their Assemblies. His dogmas are clearly discernible in both the speculative systems and the governmental reorganisations of the revolutionary era. It was he who largely contributed to promote the theory of rational state. Where his theorising touched government in its more practical aspect, his ideas were in some cases singularly fruitful.

Rousseau's influence on the literary figures of England was enormous. Paine and Godwin for their social doctrine, Wordsworth and Coleridge for their love of Nature, Byron and Shelley for their

18 (Contd.)

be very healthy. The government should in the extreme case apply minimum coercion to correct the recalcitrant minority for the benefit of the majority and in no case should the force applied be more than it is needed. Persuasion is preferred to application of force because "Government is never supported by fraud until it cannot be supported by reason" (ibid. Cl.VIII).

revolutionary ideology were indebted to him. The dignity of man as man is but Rousseau's humanism which was "carried on with increased richness and subtlety in Romantic poetry. Childhood is idealised by Blake, Wordsworth and Coleridge; freedom and passion inspire the heroes and heroines of Shelley".¹⁹

(E) HELVETIUS (1715-1771) wrote little but whatever he wrote contributed a great deal to the development of utilitarian thought. He distinguished between public and private, general and individual interests and tried to establish the supremacy of personal desires over state service. In a bid to seek harmony between private passions and common interests he prescribed the imparting of similar type of education to all. He noted the strange irony of the fact that all the rich and the poor die -- the former of boredom and the latter of starvation. To bridge this vast gulf, he advocated equal opportunities of progress to all.

He opined that men are born with equal powers and capacities and their conduct and behaviour are determined solely by self-interest -- man's actions are always directed towards the attainment of maximum happiness, satisfaction of all legitimate desires. With this hypothesis he examined the success of a government : greatest happiness to the greatest number becomes the yardstick of a successful government. He further maintains that the character of the government decides the

19 C.H.Herford, The Age of Wordsworth: London, 1960, p.XVI.

character of the people.

It is to be remembered that the social theories and the political creeds of Helvetius exercised tremendous influence on Godwin, Mary Wollstoncraft and Shelley. Godwin derived considerable inspiration from Helvetius for shaping his egalitarian and material philosophy. According to H.N. Brailsford, Helvetius had been Godwin's chief precursor. Mary Woolstoncraft's ideas about the education of women and their emancipation may be traced to the feminism of Helvetius. Shelley's early reading of Helvetius helped him to be allergic to the practical aspect of religion. Shelley's violent attack of institutionalised Christianity can to some extent be traced to the influence of Helvetius.

(F) D'HOLBACH (1723-1789), the most prolific author amongst the French Encyclopaedists, held that the government is constituted of a minority chosen by a majority to promote the ends of a society; it is a kind of gentleman's agreement between the government and the people and consequently the agreement comes to an end if the government fails to work for the welfare of one and all. Holbach found all the forms of government defective and devoid of promise for permanent good. He championed tolerance on the part of the government and freedom of the press and no the then existing government satisfied these two basic tenets of his opinion.

Helbach's attack on domestic tyranny was still more scathing;

in his opinion, women became the instruments of secret sensual pleasures of men as they were refused the right to a sensible education. "He talks of the absurdities of women's education; draws a bitter picture of a woman's fate in a loveless marriage of convenience; remarks that esteem is necessary for a happy marriage, but asks sadly how one is to esteem a mind which has emerged from a schooling in folly, assails the practice of gallantry and the fashionable conjugal infidelities of his day."²⁰ Holbach's feminism attracted Shelley so much that he advocated equal rights to women with men in all spheres.

(G) TOM PAINE (1737-1809), hailed as one of the prominent champions of mankind, was never content with his lot, nor was he ever content with the lot of his fellowmen. While summing up the difference between the ideas of political philosophers like Voltaire, Locke, Cromwell, Rousseau, etc., and those of Paine, Howard Fast says, "they (Voltaire, etc.) wrote abstractly of the patterns of change; Paine wrote realistically of the method of change. They were philosophers who created political philosophy; Paine was a revolutionist who created a method for revolution. They moved men to thought; Paine moved men to thought and action. They dealt with theories and ideas; Paine dealt with the dynamics of one force playing against another."²¹

20 H.N.Brailsford, Shelley, Godwin and their Circle: Oxford; 1942, p. 197.

21 Howard Fast, The Selected Works of Tom Paine: (Introduction), New York; 1946, p. XII.

Rousseau's sentimental idealism did not appeal to Paine because he was essentially a rationalist. Nevertheless, he condemned monarchy, nobility and all such hereditary forms of government on the ground that they operate for the benefit of the few in callous disregard to the aspirations of the many. He preferred democracy though he was fully aware of its limitations in looking after the affairs of a vast bulk of population. In Rights of Man, which according to Howard Fast, is one of the finest statement of eighteenth century democratic philosophy, ever formulated, he attacked feudalism, its succession of great landed property and its search for further propriety and property, for despotism leads to war and to political oppression. While pointing out the evils of monarchy he makes a distinction between society and the State. He is of the opinion that the feudal interest, in their control of governments had invaded society as a whole and estranged and alienated man from Nature.

Another significant contribution of Paine is the doctrine of natural constitution. He contends that a constitution is an antecedent to a Government. A Government without a good and sound constitution is like a ship without a rudder. In Paine's opinion all the enactments of legislature cannot be called laws. Laws are only those acts of an assembly that have universal operation or apply to every individual of that assembly. Paine's greatest contribution to political thought is the plan of social security which he proposed in Rights of Man. He is the only thinker of his time who created many battle cries and slogans of a revolution. Paine's influence on the Romantic poets was indirect

and short-lived, but on Shelley it was direct and abiding. His aggressive tone is discernible in the political essays of Shelley.

"Where liberty is, there is my country", as expressed by Benjamin Franklin, reveals the spirit of eighteenth century humanity. But the befitting answer "Where is not Liberty, there is mine" is of Paine. "It is the watchword of the knight-errant, the marching music that sent Lafayette to America and Byron to Greece, the motto of every man who prizes striving above enjoyment, honours comradeship above patriotism and follows an idea that no frontier can arrest. Paine was indeed of no century, and no formula of classification can confine him.... In his spirit of adventure, in his passion for movement and combat, there Paine is romantic. Paine thought in prose and acted epics. He drew horizons on paper and pursued the infinite in deeds."²²

(H) CONDORCET (1743-1794), the author of Outlines of an Historical View of the Progress of the Human Mind, was a radical republican thinker. He believed that each generation has considerable power of pure reason to determine, define and mould the form and working of its institutions. He was opposed to any change in the fundamental law. He hailed the formation of the French Republic declaring it to be the triumph of reason in society and Government and a happy augury of complete regeneration of the degenerate race. But he became extremely critical of the cruelty and waste in the game of war. His intuitive assertion that the wealth,

22 H.N. Brailsford, op.cit., pp. 56-57.

social condition and culture would be equally distributed amongst citizens through the enlightened function of free Government has, however, not come to true. His sincere optimism and the doctrine of perfectibility can be understood from his belief in the future when the Sun will shine only upon a world of free men who will recognise no master except their reason and when tyrants and slaves, priests and their stupid or hypocritical tools will no longer exist except in history or on the stage. Shelley in his *Queen Mab* agrees with Condorcet in believing that the germ of perfection is present in every heart and is ready for nurturing by the forces of light and liberty. Presumably Shelley owes to Condorcet the mental attitude to view history in stages, appreciating an age to the proportion of liberty attained. This optimistic idea of future progress and perfection in human nature and society appears in "the romantic projects of the utopian socialists; and also in the poems of Shelley; the earlier poems of Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey".²³

(I) WILLIAM GODWIN (1756-1835), to quote his biographer Brown, was "the perfect flower of a stock deserted for many generations to non-conformity and moral inculcation."²⁴ He presumably conceived the idea of writing Political Justice. after reading Burke's Reflections, Mary Wollstonecraft's Vindication of the Rights of Women and Paine's Rights of Man. And with its publication in 1793 he emerged from "his comparative obscurity to become almost overnight the leading radical social philosopher of his age."²⁵

23 F.W.Coker, Recent Political Thought; Calcutta, 1962, p. 28.

24 Ford K. Brown, Life of William Godwin; London; 1962, p. 3.

25 K.N.Cameron, Shelley and his Circle; Oxford; 1961, Vol.I, p. 9.

Political Justice is his first document that gives vent to his new socio-political and moral ideas. Some of the basic tenets enshrined in it are mechanical materialism, political anarchism, necessitarianism and perfectibility of men. Beginning with Locke-Hartley tradition that physical influences are negligible compared to moral causes, he attributed supreme importance to education and Government, because he asserts that Government works upon mind. And consequently change of opinion brings change in Government. He attributes slavery to the continued interest of the tyrants in holding back their subjects from understanding the advantages of freedom. The attraction of despotism is so strong that ~~the~~ emancipation becomes almost impossible; but when "true crisis shall come, not a sword will need to be drawn, not a finger to be lifted up."²⁶ This typical Godwinism became the guiding principle of Wordsworth's Oswald.²⁷ Going against the prevailing mood of society he establishes the right of the have-nots to demand a share of the spares of the haves. To Godwin generosity is no virtue but duty.

Godwin opines that the practice of awarding punishment to convicts betrays the very purpose because the punitive aspect of law is given upper hand in callous disregard to the reformatory aspect. Godwin

26 Political Justice, Book IV, Chapter 2, Vol. I, p. 223.

27 Wordsworth: 'To-day you have thrown off a tyranny
That lives but in the torpid acquiescence
Of our emasculated souls, the tyranny
Of the world's masters with the musty rules
By which they uphold their craft from age to age.
You have obeyed the only law that sense
Submits to recognise; the immediate law,
From the clear light of circumstances, fleshed
Upon and independent of Intellect.

(The Borderers)

looks upon crime as an error which proceeds from a defective social set up and hence if the institutions of society are properly reorganised there is little possibility of such an error.²⁸ Godwin opines that criminals should be treated sympathetically because it is the want of sympathy, in one form or another, which thwarts the nobler instincts of man and often turns him into a criminal. Under no circumstances should inhuman treatment be meted out to the criminals because it is ~~the~~ crime which should be hated and not the criminal. And moreover, punishment involves violence. Violence on a greater scale becomes war and war brings in its trains evils like misery, death, starvation and destruction. He attacks patriotism since it is a smokescreen to hide nefarious and selfish intentions of the so-called champions of patriotism.

Godwin puts too much emphasis on truth and reason. "Sound reasoning and truth when adequately communicated must always be victorious over error. Truth, then is omnipotent, and the vices and moral weaknesses of man are not invincible. Man, in short, is perfectible, or in other words, susceptible to perpetual improvement. These sentiments... are explosives capable of destroying the whole fabric of government. For if truth is omnipotent, why trust to laws? If man will obey argument, why use constraint?"²⁹ But here, it seems, Godwin suffers from a

28 Godwin: 'What... can be more shameful than for society to make an example of those whom she has goaded to the breach of order, instead of amending her own institutions which, by straining order into tyranny, produced the mischief?' Political Justice: Vol. II, p. 713.

29 H.N. Brailsford, op.cit., p. 105.

contradiction. He gives reason a high position being himself well aware that most men rarely reason. This lacuna in his approach "led him to ignore the aesthetic and emotional influences by which the mass of men can best be led to a virtuous ideal".³⁰ Even his most ardent follower Shelley³¹ supplements this defect in the teaching of his master.

Godwin's Necessitarianism has three distinct uses : to exonerate the criminal from crime; to preach truth and justice and to believe in perfectibility. He opines that since a virtue or a vice is the result of persuasion, threats or violence are of no use in uplifting the moral stature of man.

Godwin's political ideals are based on philosophical anarchism; the only necessity of Government is to supply the few cases to which society and civilisation are not conveniently competent. Therefore, its annihilation, by means of argument and persuasion, would do men and society lasting good. Another aspect of his anarchism is equalisation of property since property breeds corruption in both the extremes -- the rich amass wealth by fraud and spend it in evil ways; the poor starve

30 Ibid., p. 104.

31 Shelley moves half-consciously from the standpoint of Godwin that mankind are to be reasoned into perfection. The contention of Shelley is that the contemplation of beauty is of greatest importance in the progress towards reasoned virtue. "My purpose", he writes in the preface to Prometheus Unbound, "has been ... to familiarise... poetical readers with beautiful idealisms of moral excellence; aware that until the mind can love, and admire, and trust and hope, and endure, reasoned principles of moral conduct are seeds cast upon the highway of life, which the unconscious passenger tramples into dust, although they would hear the harvest of his happiness".

for bare necessities of life and adopt unfair means to satisfy their needs.

Unlike Rousseau, Godwin highlights the positive role of education in inculcating virtue even in an honest ploughman. Imperfect Government keeps people uneducated and ushers in various evils. Godwin even wants to do away with institutions like marriage and paternal affection when virtues like equality and fraternity shall be the order of society.

(J) ERASMUS DARWIN (1731-1802), English scientist and poet, was one of the foremost physicians of his day. Though he was a total failure in medical profession, his training was not a fiasco; it helped him to systematize his philosophical thought to which he owed his seat of esteem. He was the grandfather of the renowned biologist, Charles Darwin, in real, as well as, spiritual sense. It is he who showed in germination the nascent ideas of the theory of evolution which had its full bloom in Charles Darwin. His importance is mainly as a transitional figure: he stands at the threshold of a new era, taking most of his basic assumptions from eighteenth century materialism but also prefiguring the more sophisticated approach of scientists like Charles Darwin and others.

Darwin was a child of the eighteenth century and was a convinced deist. In his ideas of aesthetics and psychology he followed in the tradition of English materialism established by Locke, Hume, Berkeley

and David Hertley. His literary works, especially Zoënomia are interesting for their apparent anticipation of the later theories of Charles Darwin and others and also for the emphasis on the physical basis of thought and emotion. Influence of Darwin on Shelley can be traced to the latter's short-term deism and long-term materialism.

(K) VOLNEY (1757-1820), the French savant, was born on February 3, 1757 of well-to-do family. Being strongly individualistic, he assumed the surname of Volney discarding Boisgirais, his earlier surname, received owing to his father's estate. To know the world under the Sun, he went on tour abroad and for long four years he travelled a great part of Egypt, Syria and other countries and in 1787 printed his impressions in a book entitled Voyage en Egypt et en Syria. His Magnum Opus, Les Ruins, rightly called philosophy of history, appeared in 1791. In it he traced the rise and fall of empires and attributed the fall to the corrupt practices of Kings, Bishops and their sycophants as well to the throttling effects of dehumanising roles of social, political and religious institutions. He did not rest there. Being eager to put his politice-economic theories into practice, he bought an estate in Corsica in 1792. Though he was thrown into prison during Jacobian triumph, he somehow escaped guillotine.

Out of frustration he sailed for the United States in 1795 but ^{of} ^{was} within two years he was accused ^{of} being a French spy, ^{was} sent to prepare for the reoccupation of Louisiana by France, and was forced to return to France in 1798. Though he was not a follower of Napoleon, the latter

appointed him to a post of distinction being highly impressed by his modest character and liberal views. He died in Paris in 1820. Shelley was very much influenced by his Les Ruins as evidenced by many of Shelley's poems.

In Les Ruins Volney traces the developments leading to the fall of empires and kingdoms and he puts the blame squarely on the institutions of man. "... You have massacred the people, burnt their cities, destroyed cultivation, reduced the earth to a solitude; and you ask the reward of your work! Miracles then must be performed, the laborers whom you cut off must be recalled to life, the walls re-edified which you have overthrown, the harvest reproduced which you have destroyed, the laws, in fine, of heaven and earth reversed; those laws established by God himself, in demonstration of His magnificence and wisdom; those eternal laws anterior to all codes, to all the prophets; those immutable laws, which neither passions nor the ignorance of man can pervert; but that passion which mistakes, that ignorance which observes no causes and predicts no effects, has said in the folly of her heart: 'Everything comes from chance; a blind fatality dispenses good and evil on the earth so that prudence and wisdom cannot guard against it', or else assuming the language of hypocrisy, she has said: 'All things are from God; He takes pleasure in deceiving wisdom, and confounding reason...' and ignorance applauding herself in her malice, has said: 'Thus I shall not be inferior to that science which detest ... and has added: 'I will oppress the weak and devours the fruits of his

labours; and I will say 'It is God who decreed and fate who ordained it so'.³²

Volney's works and especially his Ruins exerted tremendous influence on Shelley during his formative years. The violent denunciation of monarchs, priests and other earthly tyrants in his first long poem Queen Mab is a pointer to the profound influence of Volney on Shelley. It can be said in short the theme of Queen Mab owes a great deal to Volney's Ruins. Commenting on the influence of Volney on Shelley's Queen Mab Carl Grabe observes, "The past he meant to do in the spirit of Volney's Ruins, revealing the sins by which fell the empires of antiquity, and like Volney looking to a glorious future when mankind, having learned its lesson at last, after repeated failures, should establish the kingdom of heaven on earth."³³ We can discern the influence of Volney in the utterances of the Spirit who, while surveying the ruins of dead empires, Palmyra, Egypt, Salem, Athens, Rome and Sparta, says

... Oh! they were friends!
But what was he who taught them that the God
Of Nature and benevolence had given
A special sanction to the trade of blood?

(Queen Mab; II; 154-157)

The purpose of this chapter is not to show that Shelley had little originality and that what he said was at best a random expression of

32 Volney, Ruins, translated, Boston, 1835, p. 29.

33 Carl Grabe, op.cit., p. 102.

thoughts derived from ecletic sources through his reading of a galaxy of thinkers. True, Shelley was very well read and his vast reading stood him in good stead while indulging in desperate speculations. But Shelley had some intrinsic set of values and while going through works of others he encouraged his mental process to pick and choose only those aspects of others' thoughts which corroborated with his own ideas and vehemently rejected those which could not convince him. And as he matured with age, Shelley did not hesitate to discard opinions he had earlier held in high esteem, if those appeared to be inadequate to him.

**Treatment of evil in different phases of
Shelley's work and the significance of
his concept of evil for his poetry.**

Chapter - IV

FIRST PHASE (1800-1811)

Any comparative study to trace the development of Shelley's thought and poetry would reveal two cardinal aspects of his poetry -- thought and feeling. Being a precocious child by nature, Shelley showed an immense understanding of the problem of social inequity from a very tender age. It is a mystery as to how Shelley became so much conscious of the evil all around him at that age. An average boy of his age could easily remain happy being callously unmindful of the fact of suffering of humanity. His rich parentage could have been a good excuse for his indifference. But he was destined to be otherwise.

'Boyhood shows the life as morning shows the day' - can reasonably be said of Shelley. Not only it can be said but it can be said with emphasis as well. There are very few poets in English literature, who showed so much consistent development as Shelley did. Shelley's was a rare case of consistent maturity. Often children take a note of additions all around them, but they do take it out of some puerile curiosity. And hence one is simply bewildered to know Shelley's grasp over the dark side of reality. Though feelings dominate thoughts in his lyrics but there are a good number of poems in which thought dominates over lyrics but there are a good number of poems in which thought

~~'dominates over lyricism or spontaneity'~~ No doubt Shelley's idea of the nature of poetry goes a long way to show that he regarded poetry as a means to serve the positive end of bringing about a change in the existing order. And poetry, divorced from thought cannot accomplish this noble task. Hence it is but natural that Shelley should have profound belief in the paramount importance of thought in poetry. Shelley never made any secret of his positive emphasis on the dominance of thought not only in his poetry but on the development of his whole entity.

We must not be oblivious of the fact that Shelley's poetry shows a continuous development and maturity of thought which is coterminous with his development as a poet. It is significant that his thought seldom suffers any relapse or reversion; it continues to develop, deepen and mature with the passage of time. But unfortunately many critics missed or ignored this singular achievement of Shelley. Some critics appreciated Shelley but they did so for wrong reasons since they appreciated lesser qualities of Shelley such as his lyrical excellence, sonority, spontaneity and so on proportionately ignoring the genuine claim of Shelley as a positive and consistent thinker. But there were still others who well recognized this singular achievement of Shelley and acclaimed his genius. Karl Marx, whose knowledge of the historical perspective of the development of literature as well as philosophy of many countries is simply unbelievable, has unequivocally pointed out with emphasis that Shelley's thought was in the continuous process of maturity, and had he lived longer, he "would always have been one of the

advanced guards of socialism."¹

To trace the development of his ideas we will go a long way if we simply analyse his ideas in an early poem like Queen Mab and in a mature poem like The Mask of Anarchy. For instance his ideas in Queen Mab were largely vague, nebulous and sometime amorphous and betray his lack of depth and accuracy. In other words his reformism in Queen Mab is couched in a verbose and bombastic style; while in The Mask of Anarchy language and style are simpler but powerful. It can clearly be seen that verbiage and bombast of the early phase have yielded place to lucidity and profundity in the maturer phases.

A critical evaluation of Shelley's early poems shows the significance of his nascent ideas for his early poetry. And if we trace the relation between his nascent ideas and his early poems, it seems that there is a parallel development of both. Being precocious in disposition and studious by nature, Shelley did have a unique grasp of the serious problems of the days since his boyhood. He used to read for hours on end day in and day out and to brood over still longer and hence it is little wonder that the origin of such characteristics as reforming zeal, republican spirit, egalitarian creed and obsessive concern for the problem of evil can be easily traced to the social and political ideas surging in his mind during this period.

The singular feature during this period was the well-meritted

1 E. Avelling, Shelley's Socialism : Manchester; 1947, p. 4.

change in the nature of his thought and poetry from an ivory tower romanticism to a consciousness of social problems and duties. True, poems like Original Poetry, Victor and Cazire, and Wandering Jew abound in 'Terrorism', 'Occultism' and 'Mysticism' but the threads of 'Reformism', 'Republicanism' and 'Egalitarianism' are artistically interwoven in the fabric of the terrifying incidents in these poems.

It was a strange coincidence that Shelley, whose obsessions with the problem of evil was a life-long one, ^{dealt} ~~dealt~~ on the theme of evil² in his very first poem, Verses on a Cat which was composed in the transition period of the closing eighteenth century and emerging nineteenth, when the poet had hardly attained the age of composing a poem, not to make a mention of its thought-content. The poem reveals and establishes beyond doubt his awareness of 'the modes of distress which torture the tenants on earth'. Although the poem is about an insignificant feline species -- a cat -- the poet speaks of 'the various evils, which like so many devils', attend the poor soul from their birth. But why there is agony of life? Is it because of something inherent in the system or owing to something imposed upon? Apparently the minimum demand and expectation of everyone are reasonable and capable of fulfilment but underneath there is the unbridgeable gulf between what one possesses and what one longs for:

- 2 Ironically, his last poem The Triumph of Life, which remained unfinished owing to the cold touch of cruel death, was also a sincere endeavour on the part of the poet to find an answer to ultimate problem of evil.

One wants society
 Another variety
 Others a tranquil life;
 Some want food,
 Others as good,
 Only want a wife.

(IV, 19-24)

The cat suffers but by no canons of judgement we can say that its expectation from the society is unreasonable or too much because

This poor little cat
 Only wanted a rat

(V, 25-26)

Then the pertinent question arises as to why does the little cat suffer when its desire is so meagre and reasonable. For this we will have to dive deeper. It would be too much to expect that Shelley had already found answers to all these baffling and apparently unaccountable problems -- definitely he did not find that and he himself was fully aware of his limitations and made a clean breast of his incapability:

Some a living require
 And others desire
 And old fellow out of way
 And which is the best
 I have to be guessed
 For I cannot pretend to say.

(III, 13-16)

But the very fact that these problems had stirred his emotion is sufficient to draw our sympathy for this boy who was destined to be one of the most controversial men of letters of the English speaking world.

Taking the thread from the last line of the above-quoted passage, I like to say here with emphasis that one thing is very clear about Shelley: he had no pretensions. We may genuinely believe that had Shelley indulged himself in the art of pretending, he would have been able to absolve himself of many serious charges genuinely brought against him by the age he lived in as well as those succeeding. Unlike many reputed poets, Shelley was singularly consistent in his preaching as well as practising. In fact he was one of the few persons who were always sincere in their dealings and he always practised what he preached and preached what he practised. Such close conformity between one's actions and sermons is rare even today. Many of the utterances of Shelley could be taken on their face value, their inherent contradiction notwithstanding. His was the words coming out of deep thought and sincere feeling.

Evils of colonialism are very much known today. Now there is no two opinion about the fact that colonialism is an indirect and inhuman way of immorally exploiting the people of the colony by its master race in the pretence of civilising the former so that it learns to stand on its feet; in plain words it means a shameful drainage of wealth of colony and consequent pauperisation of its inhabitants. But we simply wonder to see an English boy of seventeen, belonging to the privileged class, protesting in unequivocal terms against the nefarious colonial designs of his own country. It is still more astonishing because of the fact that this shrill voice of protest and prophecy rose as early as in 1700 when the world made a complacent sanction of

the idea of colonisation and thought that its good effects outnumbered its evil effects, if any, and that too from the soils of England which was the most powerful and effective champion of colonial rule.

Shelley could easily see behind the smoke-screen of the British colonial design and consequently could attribute all the miserable conditions of the Irish people to the ills of colonisation since Ireland had been for long a colony of England. In the Irishman's Song (1809) Shelley fulminated against England because of the crime it had perpetrated against Ireland. It is the British colonial expansion that has caused the wide wasting ruin in Ireland.

See! the wide wasting ruin extends all around
Our ancestor's dwellings lie sunk on the ground
Our foes ride in triumph throughout our domains,
And our mightiest heroes lie stretched on the planes

(6-10)

No word can describe the extent of all-round suffering of the Irish people: Literally all good turned to evil:

Ah! dead is the harp which was wont to give pleasure
Ah! sunk is our sweet country's rapturous measure,

(11-12)

Shelley does not advise Irish men to accept things lying low. He does not ask them to be fatalist and to unquestionably accept the colonial rule of England and remain impotent, weak and weak. The champion of revolution and the hater of oppression cannot even dream of such a pusillanimous measure. What Shelley suggests is exactly that

which fits in his philosophy. No evil is permanent and the duration of evil could be and should be curtailed and its wings clipped by the conscious and deliberate efforts of the sane-thinking people all over the world. He, therefore, inspires the Irish in the name of their patriots who even sacrificed their lives in the great cause of their country. The Irishmen should fight the oppression; not only that, they should fight till the last drop of their blood and should not rest or respite until and unless the last vestige of the colonial rule is uprooted from their holy motherland:

Ah! where are the heroes; triumphant in death,
 Convulsed they recline on the blood sprinkled heath,
 Or they yelling ghosts ride on the blast that sweeps by,
 And 'my countrymen' vengeance', incessantly cry.

(13-16)

Colonisation helps neither the master nor the slave. The slave country is reduced to a meagre animal existence owing to the exploitation of the ruling country. It gradually gets deprived of even basic human qualities such as moral courage, righteousness, charity and fellow feeling and becomes the breeding ground of vices like selfishness, flattery and all sorts of degradations associated with the lives of degenerated human beings. And contrary to popular belief, the ruling country is not also ultimately benefitted on account of its colonial empire. Since the country flourishes on the exploitation of its colonies, its own people become expert in the art of mendacity, treachery, exploitation, hypocrisy and selfishness. Instead of stabilising its

economy on the correct footing by increasing production and ensuring smooth and equitable distribution, it seeks short-cut to national prosperity through shameful exploitation. And consequently, when it is deprived of its colonies, its economy crumbles like a pack of cards. And to crown it all, it breeds unending rivalries and wars between the countries having colonies of its own and those not having colonies but aspiring to have. One simply steeps in admiration when one finds that even at such an early age Shelley could see through the nefarious game of colonisation and could decry it with great vehemence rising above the petty considerations of chauvinism and national prejudices.

War (1810) unmistakably shows Shelley's understanding of the horrors and evils of war. He broods over the main cause of human misery and squarely puts the blame on the despicable manoeuvres of kings and statesmen which often, if not always, leads to war. In this poem he declares in unequivocal terms that 'death', 'fate', and 'ruin' have been hurled on this bleeding world by 'ambition', 'avarice', and 'power' of these worldly monsters disguised as monarchs.

Ambition, power and avarice have hurled
Death, fate and ruin, on a bleeding world.

1-2

Life of a soldier is deliberately glorified and romanticized. He is presented as a superman who is smilingly willing even to sacrifice his life at the altar of his country. Wreaths of flowers are deliberately placed to hide the tormenting presence of the corpse within. But Shelley

had the unique insight of seeing the ugly truth behind the machinations of war.³ It is strange that at that early age he could see 'the skull beneath the skin'. The brave and sincere soldier leads a life of extreme hardship and dies in the foreign land unwept and unsung.⁴ He even cannot have a last glimpse of his near and dear ones, his kith and kin. He has sacrificed his pleasure, his joys, his happiness and his peace of mind for fulfilling the whims and fads of his king; and he is going to sacrifice his life. But what for? In bleeding body he utters his doubt.

- 3 It is interesting to note that it was simply the ills of colonisation which resulted in the First World War since the newly-powerful Germany shockingly realised that the colonial dish had already been shared mostly by England, France, Spain and Portugal. Germany, aspiring to 'have a place under the Sun', and thinking herself 'capable of infinite expansion' challenged the monopoly of England and France and took to arms. Ironically enough the Second World War was a sequel to the First. Even Rabindranath Tagore bitterly attacked war: "Call it patriotism if you so like, call it nationalism if you so please, call it defence of democracy if you so chose, but war after all is the wild dance of death" said he. Though there are some 'just wars' but most of the wars take place when "might is right, greed is guide, and selfish advancement is nationalism."

S. Radhakrishnan, one of the greatest of philosopher-rulers of the modern world, could easily see the nefarious design behind a war. In one of his essays he declared, "Even as cannibalism, head-hunting, witch-burning and duels are regarded as antisocial, war must be regarded as a monstrous evil. We must admit that moral standards apply to states also; and actions considered evil and unsocial in an individual, cannot become right and moral when performed by the state. War, which is murder and theft committed by large number, however necessary it may be, is an evil." S. Radhakrishnan: Illusions of War: Specimens of English Prose; ed. Roy & Bhattacharya. Macmillan; 1970.

- 4 Wilfred Owen in his war poems in general, and in Futility in particular, exposes the ugly and inhuman aspect of war. George Bernard Shaw in his Arms and the Man deromanticises the life of a soldier and shows that it is not patriotism but mercenary considerations that enrolls one as a soldier and that all talks of self-sacrifices gallantry and chivalry are mere high-sounding nonsense since a soldier, like any civilian,

(Contd.)

Monarch Thou

For whose support this fainting frame lies low;
 For whose support in distant land I bleed,
 Let his friend's welfare be the warrior's need.

11-14

The last line immediately catches our imagination and draws our appreciation. What a befitting parting wish. No honour for himself, no reward for his family; but only the welfare of his friends; but that reasonable demand is not fulfilled because that does never reach the ears of the king:

4 Contd.

places safety of self at the top and does not hesitate to take mean recourse to save his own life.

If we study the poems of the pre-world war poets (Siegfried Sassoon, Wilfred Owen and others) and the post-world war poets (T.S.Eliot and others) we may have an idea of the spiritual void the world wars have created. Commenting on this peculiar post-war development S.U.Khan writes, "There is a shade of difference, however between the strong indignation of the War poets and the blinding disillusionment of the postwar years, of which the chief spokesman is Mr. T.S.Eliot. The war poets knew the futility of war; they did not know the futility of a whole civilisation. They knew something of the values which was unacceptable to them and against which they revolted; they had not yet yet known the moral and spiritual desolation of the post-war years". S.U.Khan : Modern English Poetry from 1920 to 1930; Milton and the Devils Party and other Essays; Aligarh; 1969, p.63.

Sassoon was bitterly critical of the gambling of war. "According to him there is some one responsible for the maddening massacres, the unbelievable suicides in trenches and the pathetic nervous breakdown of modern warfare. Perhaps the 'Cheery old' and blundering generals, perhaps the toddling 'scarlet major', perhaps the lustily cheering crowds, who send the brilliant young soldiers to their doom, are to blame; Sassoon is not quite sure" (ibid., pp. 63-64). But the most scathing attack on war probably came from the pen of Wilfred Owen who had a first hand experience of the evils of war and who was killed in the First World War just before seven days of the armistice when he was hardly twenty-five. The following sad lines of Exposure haunt us even today.

Slowly our ghosts drag home; glimpsing the sunk, fires glossed
 With crusted dark-red jewels; crickets jingle there;
 Shutters and doors, all closed; on us the doors are closed;
 We turn back to our dying.

He hears me not____ ah! no kings can hear,
For passions voice has dulled their listless ear.

15-16

This poor dying soldier does not know to whom he should place his last desire. He lifts his hands and offers his prayer to the Almighty and succumbs to his injury. But Shelley won't spare this well-dressed and well-fed monster sitting on the throne and flourishing on human misery. He lifts his hand, points his finger and declares point-blank.

Oppressors of mankind to you we owe
The baleful stream from where these miseries flow;
For you how many a mother weeps her son,
Snatched from life's course ere half his race was run!
For you how many a widow drops a tear,
In silent anguish, on her husband's bier!

23-28

The widow of the hero puts a volley of questions before 'Almighty power' about the desolation wrought by war. Her queries reveal that Shelley repudiated the divine-right theory of the kings. He scathingly criticised their manouvres:

It is then Thine, Almighty power, she cries,
Whence tears of endless sorrow dim these eyes?
Is this the system which thy powerful sway
Which else the shapeless chaos sleeping lay,
Formed and approved?

(29-33)

Shelley disapproves of the eighteenth century optimistic philosophy of 'whatever is, is right' and with greater conviction he discards the divine-right of kings. All these human agonies and sufferings can have no divine sanction whatsoever. And consequently he,

who is instrumental in bringing so much ill upon mankind, can never be the chosen agent of God.

He never bade the war-note swell
He never triumphed in the work of hell.

(35-36)

It becomes clear that for this fallen state of human beings monarchs are responsible to a great extent. Monarchs are the symbols of material tyranny and are the evil counterparts of the priests who stand for spiritual tyranny.

Monarch of earth! Thine is the baleful deed,
Thine are the crimes for which Thy subject bleed.

(37-38)

In a mental state of anguish and utter frustration Shelley asks whether this evil state will remain forever thereby making the future of mankind barren and bleak.

Ah! when will come the time, when o'er the plain
No more shall death and desolation reign?

(43-44)

But one of the preconditions for the dawning of that bright day is that monarchy with all its evil accomplices should be done away with. The millennium would come but

Not whilst some in cold ambition's dreams
Plans for the field of death his plodding schemes.

(47-48)

The monarch is inhuman even to his core. He is only mindful of his petty loss or gain and is oblivious of and callous to the joys and

sorrows, even of life and death, of his subject.

There is not even an iota of truth or justification in the Divine sanction behind the claim of kings, who are no better than any individual.

Kings are but dust -- the last eventful day
Will level all and make them lose their sway.

(59-60)

A Tale of Society as it is (1811) describes how the tyrant's blood hound forced the only son of the poor woman to use power for wielding arms. The man before going to the army earned a meal of honesty and 'with affectionate discourse beguiled' the keen attacks of paid and poverty'. The rigours of army life weakened his body and poisoned his natural goodness. The poem shows Shelley's conviction that inhuman treatment meted out to soldiers goes to harden their souls:

And though his form was wasted by woe
Which tyrants on their victims love to wreak
Though his sunk eyeballs and his faded cheek
Of slavery's violence and scorn did speak.

(48-51)

The poor old woman had no good and pleasant memory to fall back upon: no present means to maintain herself and no future hopes to sustain. Her only hope was her innocent and gentle son and the poor lady had pinned all her hopes on him. But he had to go to the army under conscription and when he returned what a great and tragic change. He

Had bled in battle; and the stern control
Which ruled his sinews and coerced his soul

Utterly poisoned life's unmingled bowl
And unsubduable evils on him brought.

(61-64)

The theme of death has been a recurrent and lifelong obsession with Shelley. Often we do not understand what we should surmise the reason to be. Shelley might have been in love with death since his life, thought he, was a bed of thorns or as some critics would have us believe that Shelley was an escapist and was too coward to face the difficult world. Even Shelley's works give contradictory ideas.

In one of his poems presumably composed in 1809 (and named as Dialogue by T.J.Hogg) Shelley enters into an artificial dialogue between Death and Mortal. Death does invite the Mortal to embrace him because in Death and Death only 'the innocence sleeps 'neath the peace giving sod'. 'And the good ceases to tremble at tyranny's nod'. The last lines appears to be very significant. If we are to take the meaning literally we feel that Shelley went too far. The question which obsesses us at this stage is whether good always trembles at tyranny's nod and whether death is the only remedy. Shelley has not so far formed a comprehensive philosophy to answer such intricate question, but the very fact that it posed such a serious problem points to Shelley's groping and brooding nature. The answer given by the Mortal also corroborates to this view when it praises death out of frustration of life by saying that in Death the scorpion of perfidy no longer goads and the phantoms of prejudice vanish away. But Shelley's curiosity does not stop here. He is interested

to lift the veil⁵ of Death, so his Mortal asks

Yet tell me, dark Death, when thine empire is over,
What awaits on Futurity's mist-covered shore?

(19-20)

But though Shelley's 'Death' answers in an evasive way, as expected, his recipe, even at this age, is no mean an achievement. He ushers in Love⁶ as the panacea of all ills.

... but a spirit of Love
That will name their blest advent to regions above.

In brief, Shelley's poetry of the first phase reveals that the young poet became conscious of the harm that the, social, political and religious institutions had been doing to the ignorant and backward masses. Therefore, his poetry of this period is a young man's expression of his abhorrence of tyrannical institutions such as monarchy, aristocracy and Christianity. However, the over-enthusiastic tone and the vehement denunciation of evils tend to obscure his thought.

5 I dare not unveil
The shadows that float o'er Eternity's vale (21-22).

6 Another poem composed in 1810 (also entitled by Hogg 'The Death') Shelley emphatically declares

That everything, but Love, destroyed
Must perish with its kindred clay.

Chapter - V

THE SECOND PHASE (1812-1814)

March 25, 1811 was an eventful day in Shelley's life: it was the day on which the poet was outright expelled from the Oxford University on the allegation of co-authorship with T.J. Hogg of the pamphlet entitled Necessity of Atheism. Posterity has well testified that this single incident was very important in moulding the future course of Shelley's life. His growing doubts about religion in general and Christianity in particular went a long way in straining his relations with his father. Earlier his atheistical pronouncements had estranged his first love, Harriet Grove, who was a paragon of beauty. Or it might be the other way round that his estrangement with Harriet Grove frustrated him beyond re-conciliation and led him to take cudgel against all shades of tyranny -- religious, institutional and, last but not the least, parental. He allowed a free play of his imaginative mind and thought of religion as a tool of social oppression and political exploitation. The Devil's Walk (1812) is a broadside ballad and is supposed by many to be a sort of prologue to Shelley's first long poem, Queen Mab. The Devil goes forth as natty a beau to make an on-the-spot survey of the evil activities of his worldly agents: kings, lawyers, yeomen, bishops and statesmen. The Devil is hypocrisy

incarnate. He wears masks to hide his ugly designs.

He drew on a post to hide his hoof,
He drew on a glove to hide his claw.

(5-6)

Not only the Devil himself, his agents were also maintaining double-standards. Apparently their activities appeared to be altruistic or at least harmless triflings but only the Devil could see the ultimate sinister motives of these agents.

Poor lambkins! were just doing nothing at all
But settling some dress or arranging some ball.
But the Devil saw deeper there.

(28-30)

These apparently insignificant lines go a long way to reveal the depth of Shelley's understandings of the nature of evil. Good never needs any garb, but the evil ever needs. Powerful evil, to be really powerful, need hide its real self to deceive others. Could Eve, by any stretch of imagination, doubt the bona fides of the apparently innocent Satan in disguise? 'The brainless king' is attended by many 'Imps'; he thrives on the news of human blood and so it must be a good place for Satan's agents:

Ah! ah! thought Satan, the pasture is good,
My cattle will thrive here better than others.

(45-46)

Because

They dine on news of human blood,
They sup on the groans of the dying and dead
And supperless never will go to bed.

(47-49)

To our reasonable queries as to who are these agents, where they come from and what do they look like, Shelley tells that they are friends and that they are

Fat as the death-brides on Erin's shore,
That glutted themselves in her dearest gore,
And flitted round Castlereagh.

(57-59)

At that tender age Shelley did attain the maturity of transcending national chauvinism and of realising the evil perpetrated by the British Government (symbolised in the person of notorious Castlereagh) on the people of Ireland through pauperization of the Irish and drainage of Ireland's exchequer to fill English coffers. Evil action is always evil though it is committed by the government of one's own country. Satan's agents cannot for long hide their identities and they can be easily recognized from their apparel because in every case the same attire covers the ugly spirit inside.

Far they thrive well whose garb of gore
Is Satan's choicest livery,
And they thrive well who from the poor
Have snatched the bread of penury.

(94-97)

The institution of law is nothing but a mockery and its sole purpose is to give a legal sanction to the illegal acts of exploitation of the have-nots by the haves. And consequently the institution of law functions at the direction of kings and his deputies who are in unholy league with bishops and lawyers.

The Bishops thrive, though they are big;
The Lawyers thrive, though they are thin;
For every gown, and every wig,
Hides the safe thrift of Hell within.

(100-103)

The poem unmistakably shows Shelley's growing understanding of the real cause of human misery and the channels of exploitations. It is worth noting that Shelley, even in his adolescence, came to realize how despotic and corrupt institutions were the means of the luxurious life of the rich at the cost of the poor.

The stage is set for his first long poem. 1813 saw the composition of Queen Mab, which is a covert expression of Shelley's early social and political ideas. The poem, its adolescent zeal for an ideal world notwithstanding, is a clear exposure of Shelley's absorbing interest in human affairs vis-a-vis social questions. In Queen Mab Shelley for the first time unmistakably expresses his early political and social ideas. Even a casual reading of Queen Mab will convince the reader that the poet was sincerely interested in human affairs and social forces. We should not lose sight of the fact that by the time Shelley set to work

on this poem, he had developed considerable literary skill and political insight. Being a voracious reader even at that age it is but natural that the thoughts of leading thinkers like Paine, Holbach, Godwin, etc. had gone a long way to enlarge his intellectual horizon and sharpen his artistic sensibilities. But the fact remains that the ideas contained in Queen Mab are "representative of the most advanced school of thought of the age",¹ the influence of these thinkers notwithstanding.

We meet with some dilemma when we want to understand as to why Shelley wrote this poem and what he intended to communicate through this poem. Our problem is lessened if we do not doubt the sincerity of Shelley's intention as conveyed to Miss Elizabeth Hitchener through his letter dated December 10, 1811, when he says that he intended Queen Mab "to be by anticipation a picture of the manners, simplicity and delights of a perfect state of society, the still earthly". It is a historical view of "the Past, the Present, and the Future"² with "long and philosophical notes"³ appended to it.

But we are still confronted with the question as to why Shelley needed the garb of such a poem for the propagation of his thought. Since Queen Mab is alleged to be Godwin versified, it seems that the prose style would have been more suitable. Shelley himself threw some light when he declared that he took advantage of this technique as it was the safest

1 K.N.Cameron, The Young Shelley: London; 1951, p.241.

2 Shelley to Thomas Hookham, August 18, 1812, Vol.I, p.324.

3 Shelley to Thomas Hookham, January 26, 1813, Vol. I, p.350.

way of "propagating my principles which I decline to do syllogistically in a poem."⁴ We can find some justification of Shelley's technique if we take his first wife Harriet Shelley seriously when she wrote that the poem was considered to be "too much against every existing establishment."⁵ Of course the subsequent developments support Harriet's contention. We know that the Government was deeply alarmed at the ideas contained in it and, accordingly, a Bill was filed against Shelley; he was openly charged with having "blasphemously derided the truth of the Christian Revolution and denied the existence of God as the Creator of the universe."⁶

In December 1812 Shelley wrote to Hookham, "Subjoined is a list of books which I wish you to send me very soon. I am determined to apply myself to a study that is hateful and disgusting to my very soul, but which is, above all studies, necessary for him who would be listened to as a mender of antiquated abuses, I mean that record of crime and miseries, History."⁷ The study of History was disgusting to his very soul but even then he read history with wonderful perseverance. He read history, his dislike notwithstanding, because his was a crusade against the greatest and oldest of all problems -- the problem of evil. But to try to mitigate evil one needs to have a clear idea of the nature and origin of evil. It was very clear to Shelley that to even touch the fringe of the problem of evil one need have a reasonably thorough

4 Ibid.

5 Harriet Shelley to Mrs. Nugent, May 21, 1813, Vol. I, p. 368.

knowledge of human activities in different ages. And for attaining that range of knowledge nothing could help more than History. It is simply an irony that such a profound scholar and a lover of knowledge among English poets should be damned as ethereal, subjective and evanescent and ineffectual. Mathew Arnold claimed to be the champion of classicism. But even he failed to appreciate Shelley, who was the most classical of all Romantic poets of the second generation. Mathew Arnold and Shelley were curiously the two extremely divergent products of the same traditional British educational system, the only difference is that Shelley, while rebelling against the system, tried to break his lance with the dons while Mathew Arnold championed the system and made idols of the teachers. Believing in the theory of original blissfulness of Man, Shelley tried to probe into the mystery as to how such a privileged creature could fall to such a depth. But an optimist like Shelley could not get himself reconciled to the deplorable 'Present' of mankind. And hence the appeal of Volney to him. Believing in Volney's theory and having Volney's Ruins as his guide, Shelley reveals the sins by which fell the empires of antiquity and like Volney, he looks to a glorious future when mankind, having learnt his lesson at last, after repeated failure, should establish the kingdom of Heaven on earth.

If the yesterday of man was so good how could his today become so bad? How could the pristine glory of mankind vanish so quickly? Shelley opines that it was owing to the corrupt institution which was

nothing but the making of man. Priests and monarchs are the two types of evils complementary to each other. They are the two types of tyrants determined to oppress mankind with all the arsenals in their armoury. If the priests stand for spiritual tyranny, monarchs represent physical tyranny. The spirit shows the soul of Ianthe the ruins of dead empires, Palmyra, Egypt, Athens, Rome and other empires reared on human blood and misery, worshipping demon-gods.

... oh! They were fiends!
 But what was he who taught them that the God
 Of nature and benevolence had given
 A special sanction to the trade of blood?

(Queen Mab; II; 154-157)

Shelley's interpretation hints at twentieth century's penetration when he unmasks the benevolent(?) monarchs and exposes their nefarious designs at the cost of humanity. Shelley permanently tears the myth of the divine theory of kings. To Shelley monarchy was nothing more than a recognized manner of exploiting the masses under deceptive legal and religious sanction. The kings' thirst for grandeur and pleasure leads them to senselessness and shame but ultimately the burden falls on the toiling and starving multitudes. Monarchs are no better than parasites who suck human blood and are earthquakes of the human race who proudly tread over 'prostrate millions'⁶ and gratify their passions

6 Oh, many a widow many an orphan cursed
 The building of that fame; and many father,
 Worn out with toil and slavery, implored
 The peer man's God to sweep it from the earth.

(Queen Mab; II; 141-144)

for monumental glory by exploiting the working people.

Monarchy and aristocracy, in unholy alliance, robbed the poor of their happiness and changed the world into 'thorny wilderness'. It is not only a positive evil but also the root and epicentre of many more evils. One such evil is war. 'From kings, and priests and statesmen, war arose'. The king may appear to be very happy but in fact it is just the reverse. He is unhappy and is surrounded by his troops. He is "neither free nor happy ... the fool whom courtiers nicknamed monarch, heedless of the curse of the fatherless and grief of the friendless".⁹ His very existence is miserable. He himself is a prey to base appetites and consequently smiles at the groans of the sufferers. Naturally peace is farthest from him because peace is something which come from within and no amount of material pleasures can bestow one with peace. This is a unique development and a very significant state of affairs because here we see that both the subject and the king, i.e., the exploited and the exploiter suffer alike though on different planes. Shelley here takes a very modern view of the problem and asserts that both suffer because they are creatures of precedence and custom.

... No - it is not strange,
He, like the vulgar, thinks, feels, acts and lives
Just as his father did; the unconquered powers
Of precedence and custom interpose
Between a king and virtue.

(Queen Mab; III; 351-355)

9 Carl Grabo: op.cit., p.108.

'Tell me what company thou keepest, I will tell thee what thou art', goes the proverbial saying which in plain terms means that a man is known by the company he keeps. The constant companion of the kings are the courtiers who spring from vice, treachery and wrong. They are gilded flies that fattens on corruption. Shelley tries to explore the origin of their existence and he categorically asks:

Whence, thinkest thou, kings and parasites arose?
 Whence that unnatural line of drones, who keep
 Toil and unvanquishable penury
 On those who build their palaces, and bring
 Their daily bread -- from vice, black, loathsome vice;
 From rapine, madness, treachery, and wrong;
 From all that genders misery, and makes
 Of earth this thorny wilderness; from lust
 Revenge and murder...

(Queen Mab;

But will this state remain for ever? Will the humanity always be exploited by the monarchs and their sycophants? Shelley cannot approve of such a dismal picture of the future. So he immediately declares, loud and bold:

... And when reason's voice
 Loud as the voice of natures shall have waked
 The nations; and mankind perceive that vice
 Is discord, war and misery; that virtue
 Is peace, and happiness, and harmony;
 When man's maturer nature shall disdain
 The playthings of his childhood; its authority
 Will lose its power to dazzle; its authority
 Will silently pass by; the gorgeous throne
 Shall stand unnoticed in the regal hall

Fast falling to decay; whilst falsehood's trade
 Shall be as hateful and unprofitable
 As that of truth is now.

(Queen Mab, III; 382-394)

But this qualitative change will not come out of nothing or overnight. The silent and self-effacing work of the virtuous men would prepare the ground for this change. The virtuous man who, great in his humility as kings are little in their grandeur and who, 'neither commands nor obeys' and leaves a deathless memory which causes kings to tremble. 'Nature rejects the monarch, not the man; the subject, not the citizen'. It is not Nature but man that is wholly responsible for human woe. Of all of Nature's works every creature is happy, sans the outcast 'man'.

... The Universe
 In nature's silent eloquence, declares
 That all fulfil the works of love and joy
 All but the outcast, man. He fabricates
 The sword which stabs his peace; he cherisheth
 The snakes that gnaw his heart; he raiseth up
 The tyrant, whose delight is in his woe,
 Whose sport is in his agony.

(Queen Mab;

While tracing the development of Shelley's thought and literary skills, various influences are traced. But curiously enough one very paramount influence -- the influence of Indian thought -- is ignored. But it can be said with emphasis and argued to logical end that Indian thought exerted considerable influence upon him throughout his life --

profoundly in his formative years and discernably in his later years.

Shelley was a voracious reader and he collected his materials from eclectic sources. This confounded Shelley's critics down to the present day. Reviled in his own day, castigated by Arnold and rejected by Eliot, Shelley has been defended as a psychological type by Herbert Read. He is one in whom "his countrymen least recognized their own image."¹⁰ For want of a more exact word, his manner of thought has been called 'Platonism'. Less scholarly writers portrayed William Godwin as Shelley's spiritual father. Dr. Brailsford declares that it would be no exaggeration to say that Godwin formed Shelley's mind, and that *Prometheus Unbound* was the greatest of Godwin's works".¹¹ Without undermining the importance of such opinions it can be modestly said that the Indian influence on Shelley did not receive the recognition it deserves.

While Shelley was born, though the French Revolution loomed large on the political horizon, just then another cultural revolution of no less significance was taking place in the discovery of the oriental thought by the occident.) In the penultimate decade of the eighteenth century Sir William Jones landed in Calcutta; Charles Wilkins translated Bhagwadgita, and Duperon translated Zendavesta. All these opened a window on ancient thought and coloured Shelley beyond recognition. Dr. Lind, about whose influence on him Shelley said

10 Spender: Shelley; 1952, p. 5.

11 H.N.Brailsford: Shelley, Godwin and their Circle; Oxford Univ.Press, 1951, p.135.

that he owed for that man, far more, than he owed to his father,...¹² also helped in arousing oriental interest in Shelley. Dr. Lind had a first hand experience of this land of Elephants and the colossal figures of 'Brahma', 'Vishnu' and 'Siva'. This accounts for the curious mythological interest of Shelley in India's past which in turn fascinated him in Southey's Thalaba and Curse of Kehama. All these happened while Shelley was still in Eton.

After his Eton days Shelley went to University College, Oxford. This was the college where William Jones worked and breathed his last (April 27, 1794). Thanks to the tenacity of the widow of Sir Jones, Shelley could come into a first hand contact with Jones's works. In 1804 was published the Life and Works of Sir Williams. This book excited much interest at Oxford. In all probability Shelley had gone through the pages of this book. There is also evidence that Shelley was interested in Indian lore which Sir William Jones had discovered. Echoes of Sir Williams' Hymn to Camdeo can be heard in Shelley's letter to Hogg (Jan. 21, 1811). "Had I then be sacrificing at the altar of the Indian Camdeo, the god of mystic love, you, I am sure, will never become an unreflecting votary at its shrine". Shelley had been reading Jones during his stay at Oxford and after his expulsion from Oxford, we are told that Jones's works "were among the books that Shelley ordered at Tanyralt."¹³ It may be mentioned here that his first important poem -- Queen Mab -- written during 1811 and 1812 was

13 Hughes, The Nascent Mind of Shelley; 1947, p.185.

presumably inspired by an Indian story -- The Palace of Fortune -- by Sir William Jones.

A very forceful charge is often labelled against Shelley that while composing Queen Mab, he had eaten much more than he could digest and that is why this ambitious poem is replete with contradictory ideas.) Shelley's random and haphazard reading from eclectic sources combined with his super-human zeal to eradicate evil from the fabric of human existence account for his curious tracing of the origin of evil and contradictory solutions for ushering in the millennium. If we are to treat his earlier statements with weightage then we are to accept that evil is not inherent in Nature but is the creation of man. The child is by nature good and innocent but is dipped, trained and schooled in evil by the forces of tradition of bigotry. Carl Grabo points to this apparent contradiction when he says, "Man alone is the outcast from loving nature, yet he now declares that nature herself animated to the last atom 'comprehends a world of loves and hatreds'. All is soul but in the soul exists love and hate. Evil, then, cannot be man's creation solely but is inherent in the soul itself, which is Nature."¹⁴ In a desperate bid to exonerate Shelley or to understand him more sympathetically, Grabo further says, "Shelley would seem here to be fumbling for an expression of Manicheism, resolving the universe to a conflict of the two everlasting principles, 'Ahriman' and 'Ormuzd'. Or again, he may be wrestling with the problem posed

14 Carl Grabo, op.cit., p.110.

by the Platonists: how to account for the presence of evil in a world which is the creation of the wholly perfect one? The impact of this weightier Philosophy upon the naive metaphysics of Godwin creates no more than confusion and a blinding cloud of dust.... The interest of Queen Mab is not in any answer to such ultimates, -- a task too great for any youth however great a genius, but in revealing the philosophic material with which Shelley's mind was stuffed."¹⁵

Shelley was a visionary; a dreamer of dreams not because he failed to see or lacked in courage to face life as it is. It was because, unable to bear the ugly sight "he turned to utopian visions of what the world might be."¹⁶ True, he sought the root of evil more profoundly in his later works but the fact remains that "manifestation of that evil he saw clearly from the beginning".¹⁷

15 Ibid.

16 Carl Grabe, *op.cit.*, p. 111.

17 Ibid.

Chapter - VI

THE THIRD PHASE (1815-1817)

The literary output of Shelley during this short phase registers a qualitative change as compared to the works of the immediately preceding years. One cardinal point responsible for this change may be that Shelley made a prolonged continental tour during this period. This extensive travel gave him a first-hand knowledge of and clearer insight into the evils of war in France; he saw "the country that was the seat of war" and the "innumerable forms of destruction".¹ Side by side with this outward development Shelley had some inward and purely personal development which was of no less importance. When he was emotionally drifting away like a ship sans a rudder, his relation with his first wife having reached a point of no return, his refreshing acquaintance with the delightfully lifeful Mary Godwin offered him a cozy berth for his emotional self to rest and rejuvenate. Commenting on this peculiar development ~~of incidence~~ in the life of Shelley, S.U. Khan says, "Shelley's matrimonial mishap is one of the many reasons of his unpopularity. It was believed and the belief still persists that his 'desertion' of Harriet cannot be

1 K.N. Cameron: The Young Shelley; London; 1951, p. 273.

attributed to anything else except to his moral perversity. But the facts of this particular case are much different. That Harriet flung herself upon Shelley when his affections were still engaged with his cousin, Harriet Grove, can hardly be doubted. Emotionally it was a low ebb tide when Shelley eloped with Harriet. We have no reason to doubt Harriet's sincerity but her elder sister Elisa cannot be extricated from a suspicion that she carefully planned the marriage of Harriet and Shelley with an eye on the immense fortune which Shelley was to inherit. The same Elisa or 'The Miserable Wretch' as Shelley called her, may also be said to have caused much of unhappiness in the life of the young couple.

"Shelley's letters of summer of 1813 reveal the growing estrangement between him and Harriet who learnt by this time, partly from Peacock and partly from Hogg, to laugh at the 'dreams' of her husband. She also ceased to take interest in study and she lacked sympathy for her husband's beliefs. 'She could not feel poetry and understand philosophy', Shelley complained. Moreover, the hope of immense fortune which Shelley was to inherit had receded back. It is interesting to read Shelley's poem To Harriet, written in 1814, where he pleads with Harriet to give up malice, revenge and pride and pity him if she cannot love him. In the natural sequence of such cold indifference, it was necessary for Shelley to seek love or intellectual companionship in Mary Godwin."²) Notwithstanding this domestic crisis, Shelley continued

2 S.U. Khan; The Unpopular Shelley: Milton and the Devil's Party and other Essays, Aligarh; 1969, pp. 103-104.

to give serious thought to social and political problems of the day as the poetry of the period will bear a testimony to that.

Evil propensity makes a man physically weak and morally impotent. Even courageous and spirited souls soon recoil and take compromising and cowardice attitude. William Wordsworth was no exception. This spirited soul, who burst into poetic rapture with the advent of the French Revolution calling loud and bold that it was 'bliss to be alive at that time and to be young heaven', did also recoil immediately when the excess of the atrocities became too much for him to stand. Not only did Wordsworth withdraw his support for the cause of the revolution, he made a sudden volta face and turned to be a conservative attacking everything that revolution stood for. Initially Shelley had great respect for Wordsworth and considered him to be the spiritual and practical force behind the Romantic Movement. But as Wordsworth turned renegade (if we may use the word), Shelley immediately got thoroughly disillusioned about this older poet and started directing scathing attacks towards him. In To Wordsworth (1815) Shelley literally rebukes Wordsworth for recantation. With a profound sense of shock he regrets that the poet who was once a pioneer of equality, liberty and fraternity, would abandon the ideals he had long nurtured. Since Wordsworth's approval of conservatism disappointed him, he bitterly condemned the 'poet of Nature'.

Thou wert as a lone star, whose light did shine
 On some frail bark in winter's midnight roar,
 Thou hast like a rock-built refuge stood
 Above the blind and battling multitude.
 In honoured poverty thy voice did weave
 Songs consecrated to truth and liberty, --
 Deserting these, thou leavest me to grieve,
 Thus having been, that thou shouldst cease to be.

(7-14)

All Europe was dazzled with the charisma of Napoleon and he was worshipped as a superman and even as a demigod. But to a youngman of 24, as Shelley was then, Napoleon could not hide his real self and in a poem Feelings of a Republic on the fall of Bonaparte Shelley exposes the real self of Napoleon with deep and penetrating insight. Without mincing words, Shelley starts by saying 'I hated thee, fallen Tyrant!'. Shelley not only hated but he also groaned:

'To think that a most unambitious slave
 Like thou, shouldst dance and revel
 On the grave of Liberty

(2-4)

It was the singular blunder of Napoleon that instead of building a throne of lasting excellence

... Thou didst prefer
 A frail and bloody pomp which Time has swept
 In fragments towards oblivion.

(5-7)

It seems that Shelley has overcome his puerile notions of good and evil, virtue and vice; he sounds immensely matured when he declares:

... I know
 Too late, since thou and France are in the dust,
 That virtue owns a more eternal foe
 Than Force or Fraud; old custom, legal crimes,
 And bloody Faith the foulest birth of Time.

(10-14)

These lines shake the very foundation of the works of those critics who made all ~~our~~ efforts to portray Shelley as eternally immature having a childish concept of the causes of evil.

With the composition of Alastor (published in 1815) a very significant phase of Shelley's career begins. For the first time he became introvert in the true sense of the term. His entire process of thinking undergoes a sea-change as it is conditioned by his attitude of regarding man's existence on two planes -- the sociological and the imaginative; the outer and the inner; the one based on relational approach with the society and the other having a direct bearing upon spiritual principles. Shelley is of the firm opinion that the refinement of the imaginative being is circumscribed because it attempts "to exist without human sympathy."³ It invariably breeds 'self-centred seclusion' and excludes the possibilities of being broad-minded since it makes one myopic rendering one incapable of looking beyond the beloved and towards humanity. Consequently this limitation inherent in the pursuit of an imaginative being leads to moral failing bringing in its wake disastrous end-results. The youth in Alastor "drinks deep of the

3 P.B. Shelley: Preface to Alastor

fountains of knowledge and is still insatiate. The magnificence and beauty of the external world sinks profoundly into the frame of his conceptions, and affords to their modifications a variety not to be exhausted."⁴ But he is roundly self-centred and hence callously indifferent to his kinship with his fellow human beings on the social plane. He is oblivious of the fact that "the intellectual faculties, the imagination, the functions of the sense have their respective requisitions on the sympathy of corresponding power in other human beings."⁵ This youth possesses all the sublime qualities for the attainment of 'peace within and calm around'. He is of 'uncorrupted feelings' and 'adventurous genius' and is "led forth by an imagination inflamed and purified through familiarity with all that is excellent and majestic, to the contemplation of the universe."⁶ But he failed simply because he had everything sans human element -- the elan vital -- which shapes things, moulds deformity, fills lacuna and, last but not least, imparts grace to the dull sordid drama of human existence. A human being cannot always float in air, he has to come to the ground and that very moment the tragedy begins. Because as long as "... it is possible for his desires to point towards objects thus infinite and unmeasured, he is joyous, and tranquil, and self-possessed. But the period arrives when these objects cease to suffice. His mind is at length suddenly awakened and thirsts for intercourse with an intelligence similar to itself."⁷ The poem embodies Shelley's firm belief that

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

"those who love not their fellow beings live unfruitful lives, and prepare for their old age miserable grave."⁸

From the very beginning the youth of Alaster was a visionary and he had his initial training in cosmic discipline.

By solemn vision, and bright silver dream,
His infancy was nurtured. Every sight
And sound from the vast earth and ambient air,
Sent to his heart his choicest impulses.
The fountains of divine philosophy
Fled not his thirsting lips, and all of great,
Or good, or lovely, which this sacred past
In truth or fable consecrates, he felt
And knew.

(67-75)

But he did not rest there, neither he did remain ^{~content.} ~~contented~~. He went on moving forward to 'follow knowledge like a sinking star'.

... When early youth had passed, he left
His cold fireside and alienated home
To seek strange truths in undiscovered lands.

(75-77)

But being totally engrossed with self-love he failed to recognize,
not to speak of to reciprocate, the innocent and sincere love of the
Arab maiden.

Meanwhile an Arab maiden brought his food,
Her daily portion, from her father's tent;
And spread her matting for his couch, and stole
From duties and repose to tend his steps:
Enamoured, yet not daring for deep awe
To speak her love:- and watched his nightly sleep
Sleepless herself...

(29-35)

8 Ibid.

Here we are faced with a dilemma as to whether self-centredness is a positive evil and whether a man can live peacefully if he tries to follow only the dictates of his conscience or to satisfy his sublime ego. Shelley's answer is crystal clear: a man lives not only for himself but for the society also. Since man accepts some social obligations, it is reasonably expected that he would not act in a manner detrimental to the majority interest. But what about him who has turned introvert? If the society is indifferent to him, has he not a moral right to be indifferent to the society? To appreciate Shelley's position, Mrs. Shelley's Note on Alastor might help us. Commenting upon the difference between Queen Mab and Alastor, Mrs. Shelley says, "Alastor is written in a very different tone from Queen Mab. In the latter Shelley poured out all the cherished speculations of his youth -- all the irrepressible emotions of sympathy, censure, and hope, to which the present suffering, and what he considers the proper destiny of his fellow creatures, gave birth. Alastor, on the contrary, contains an individual interest only. A very few years, with their attendant events, had checked the ardour of Shelley's hopes, though he still thought them well-grounded, and that to advance their fulfilment was the noblest task man could achieve."⁹

So far as Shelley's conception of evil is concerned, Alastor is a turning point since from this poem onward 'love' occupies the central position in Shelley's scheme of things. Love here is not something

9 Mary Shelley, Note on Alastor.

static or ineffective; here it is dynamic and is a motivating force in man's life. The indifference of the youth to human love, his thirst for imaginative love and his consequent agony and death testify Shelley's conviction that love is a psychological as well as sociological phenomenon.

Hymn to Intellectual Beauty (1816) was composed "under the influence of feelings which agitated me even to tears".¹⁰ In this poem Shelley seems to "define private theology with the spirit of Intellectual Beauty as a substitute for God."¹¹ Shelley believes that though life exists amid 'doubt, chance and mutability', even then 'Life is real, Life is earnest' and the spirit of Beauty 'gives grace and truth to life's unquiet dream. Being thoroughly disillusioned falling 'upon the thorns of life' Shelley asks in a mood of self-pity:

Spirit of Beauty, that dost consecrate
With thine own hues all thou dost shine upon
Of human thought for form, -- where art thou gone?
Why dost thou pass away and leave our state
This dim vast vale of tears, vacant and desolate.

(13-17)

Since Beauty creates truth and grace in the heart of man, it can purge society of falsehood, disgrace and other shades of evil. This civilising power of Beauty has immense potentiality and can go a long way to nourish noble thought.

Thou messenger of sympathies
That wax and wane in lover's eye --
Thou -- that to human thought are nourishment.

(II. 42-44)

10 Shelley to Leigh Hunt, December 8, 1816, Vol. I, p. 517.

11 Desmond King-Hale: Shelley - His thought and work: Macmillan, 1964, p. 68.

Though there seems little hope for the emancipation of this outcast, Man, an optimist like Shelley can hardly reconcile to such a pessimistic inference. So even in 'awful loveliness' Shelley sees a hope that will 'free this world from its dark slavery'. There seems to be an apparent contradiction in Shelley's stand when he says that the spirit of Beauty urges him to fear himself' but to 'Love all human kind'. Is it possible for any one to love everyone barring himself? But if we look at the problem from another angle, the contradiction is resolved to a great extent. Man is primarily a social being and as such his lot is, with or without his conscious effort, cast with his fellow human beings. So no permanent good may come to him in total isolation.

The Revolt of Islam (1817) is Shelley's "experiment on the temper of the public mind, as to how far a thirst for a happier condition of moral and political society survives among the enlightened and refined, the tempests which have shaken the age in which we live."¹² In this longest of his poems, the poet has endeavoured to enkindle within the bosoms of his readers "a virtuous enthusiasm for those doctrines of liberty and justice, that faith and hope in something good, which neither violence nor misrepresentation nor prejudice can ever totally extinguish among mankind."¹³ The poem is a story of 'human passion' on a super-human setting and amply displays Shelley's moral and political creed; it represents "a succession of pictures illustrating the growth

12 Shelley: Preface to The Revolt of Islam.

13 Ibid.

and progress of individual mind aspiring after excellence and devoted to the love of mankind."¹⁴ This poem is another significant attempt by Shelley to understand the origin of evil, to discuss its manifestations and to suggest remedial measures.

The 'Dedication' is an unmistakable pointer to the fact that there is an undercurrent of hard realities which Shelley had lived and the mission of the poet to ceaselessly try to reform the world without violence and bloodshed. The evil all around, manifested in the oppression of the weak by the strong, distressed him so much that he took an oath

I will be wise
And just and free, and mild, if in me lies
Such power, for I grow weary to behold
The selfish and the strong still tyrannise
Without reproach or check.

(Dedication: IV; 31-35)

Shelley believed that ignorance was a positive evil and ^{^the} ~~a~~ root cause of many secondary vices. With a view to eradicating or at least minimising his own ignorance, Shelley set upon himself the task of learning as much as possible. So with all sincerity he declares:

And from that hour did I with earnest thought
Heap knowledge from forbidden mines of lore,
Yet nothing that my tyrants knew or thought
I cared to learn, but from that secret store
Wrought linked armour for my soul, before
It might walk forth to war among mankind;

(Dedication: V: 37-42)

14 Ibid.

The oppressors, the tyrants, the exploiters did impart some knowledge to ~~the~~ men in general and ^{^ to} the younger generation in particular. But it was not that type of education which was in harmony with the proper function of education which in the word of Swami Vivekananda is the manifestation of the perfection already in a man. Naturally the oppressors did not want that through education people should know their evil design. So they not only prevented people from having real knowledge, they deliberately tried to ^{^ prevent} ~~prevent~~ the brains of young enthusiasts with distorted analyses of the realities of life. That accounts for the deliberate ^{^ neglect} ~~neglect~~ by Shelley of his curricular studies. Shelley's floating of corked bottles containing his leaflets into the sea during his Irish voyage should be seen in this context, notwithstanding the ridicule of his critics. If we just judge this action of Shelley without trying to understand the motive behind, it might provoke our laughter as the action would seem childish and even idiotic. But if we consider the motive behind, we may not be so unkind to Shelley. Many of the single actions of even civilized men of today appear nonsensical if we view it in isolation. Huge sums of money are being spent for remitting radio signals into the outer space with the hope that some other extra-terrestrial intelligent civilization, billions of miles away, might receive and communicate with men on Earth after hundreds of years to end the cosmic loneliness of man. We do not condemn this apparently futile, wild, and expensive adventure.

At the time of composition of The Revolt of Islam Shelley was deeply under the influence of Zoroaster as regards the origin of evil.

To solve that recurring and imposing dilemma as to how there could be so much of evil in the creation of that Being who is not only omnipotent but also all-loving, a readymade answer to this baffling problem seemed to lie in the system of Zoroaster. This philosophy is of the opinion that in the process of creation there are two Gods equally powerful and eternally pitted against each other. The God of good is represented by 'Ahriman' and the God of evil is represented by 'Ormuzd'. The God of good tries to eradicate evil by trying to combat the god of evil and vice-versa. It should be the endeavour, and by implication the bounden obligation, of all sane-thinking human being to try to further the cause of the God of Good and to frustrate the evil design of the God of Evil.

The symbolical fight between the serpent and the eagle represents the eternal struggle between the good principle and the evil one:

For in the air do I behold indeed
An eagle and a serpent wreathed in fight.

(Canto I, VIII. 192-193)

The fight seems to be a fatal one and both the contenders are trying to fight to finish:

Around, around, in ceaseless circles wheeling
With clang of wing and scream, the eagle sailed
Incessantly -- sometimes on high concealing
Its lessening orbs, sometimes as if it failed,
Drooped through the air; and still it shrieked and wiled
And casting back its eager head, with beak
And talon unremittingly assailed
The wreathed serpent, who did ever seek
Upon his enemy's heart a mortal wound to wreck.

(Canto I, X, 208-216)

15

In the fight the serpent was mortally wounded and fell from the mountain top into the river below. But it did not die. It fell into a boat and was taken and tended by a woman. Boat is the symbol of 'hope' and the woman of 'love'. The good is temporarily defeated but it is not destroyed; it is being reared by Hope and Love for the final fight and ultimate victory over evil. Today the world has become a degenerate one and evil reigns supreme. But this fallen state cannot continue forever. However dark and bleak the today may be, the tomorrow is bound to be happy and prosperous -- the only thing man has to do in the meantime is to wage a battle of no retreat with the evil principles and to come out victorious ultimately. Once the evil is permanently defeated and destroyed, nothing can prevent man from enjoying his state of pristine peace and glory.

Shelley's vast and varied reading coined with his personal experience made him shockingly aware of another glaring social evil: the exploitation and neglect of women by men down the ages. He is thoroughly convinced of the fact/^{that} this exploitation by man is a suicidal act on his part because in the process of weakening their female counterpart they have been weakening themselves because woman is complementary to man and consequently exploitation of women by man is like deliberate and unnecessary amputation of his own person. Shelley condemns religion in general and Christianity in particular for inculcating this anti-feminism

- 15 Shelley here uses inverse simile because unlike the prevailing religious symbol of serpent as 'evil', he makes the serpent a symbol of good as it is a symbol of change.

in man and for inciting useless and vain male-chauvinism. The very conception of the Bible that Adam, the man was created first and that Eve, the woman was made out of the rib of Adam, relegates Eve, by implication every woman, to a lower and inferior position as compared to man. And the serious aspersion that Eve was primarily responsible for the Fall of Man since it was she who was induced by the serpent and who, in her turn, induced Adam to disobey God by eating of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge,¹⁶ goes a long way to castigate woman. It is not a far-fetched imagination that people for many generations associated Eve with the word 'Evil'. "The woman in Europe and all over the world was looked upon as a mere nonentity. She formed the theme of many a discourse of the learned scholars and philosophers who wrangled among themselves over questions such as these: Has woman got a soul or not? If yes, then what precisely is the nature of her soul, is it human or animal? Supposing she does possess a human soul then what social and human position should she occupy in relation to man? Is she born as a slave to man or does she hold a position slightly superior to that of a slave?

This situation remained unchanged even through those relatively short spans of history when woman appears to have occupied a central position in the social set-up of the time, e.g., in Greece and the Roman

16 In fact man should feel grateful to 'Mother Eve' for her unique and bold decision of eating of the fruit of the 'Tree of Knowledge' instead of that of the 'Tree of Life' thereby saving man from the disaster of having eternal life.

Empire."¹⁷

Explaining the degradation of woman from the sociological point of view in a historical perspective, Frederic Engels opined that initially there was primitive communism in human groups. There was not much exploitation since the conception of individual property had not developed still then. Men used to collect food and other essentials collectively and to consume those as per needs. But with the adoption of 'agriculture' and domestication of animals far-reaching changes took place in society. Men became conscious of their own rights and possessions and 'wealth turned into property'. Women were treated as property and chattels of men and this stage is described by Engels as the historical fall of woman.

But Shelley believed in the end of exploitation of woman by man and he was deeply thinking for finding out ways for the emancipation of woman. As Mary appeared to be a prospective promise of beauty, freedom, wisdom and radicalism, he thought these virtues were necessary for the emancipation of women. Shelley was aware of the fact that in nineteenth century England the social, political and economic status of women was so inferior to that of men that they were treated as personal property of men. Not to speak of social or political equalities, even domestic equality was denied to them. Initially some middle class and lower class women enjoyed some economic independence by working in fields, factories and mines, but the capitalist agrarian policy and the new factory system

17 Mehdi Qutb: Islam the Misunderstood Religion: Delhi; 1968, p.174.

brought "much unemployment and misery for single woman and the breaking up many small rural households whose budget had always been balanced by the earnings of the wife and children."¹⁸ To a great extent Shelley owed his feminism to Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin and Desmond King-Hele has rightly said that to guide him, he had a bible at hand in the Rights of Women which he had first read in 1812.

Shelley held that the position of women in a country was the touchstone of civilisation. He had all praise for ancient Greek civilisation but he vehemently criticized it when he found that women lived in a state of subjection even at the hey day of Greek civilization. The men in Greece received the highest cultivation and refinement; while the other (women) so far as intellect is concerned, were educated as slaves and were rated but few degrees in all that related to moral and intellectual excellences above the condition of savages."¹⁹ But he praised the Roman civilization where women "held a higher consideration in society and were esteemed almost as the equal partners with their husbands in the regulation of domestic economy and the education of their children."²⁰

In England people gave respect to the women belonging to the rich classes whereas they had no respect for women belonging to low income groups. Shelley firmly opines that the misery and death of a princess is in no way of greater importance than that of the thousands of her sex.

18 G.M.Travelyan: English Social History: ELBS; 1962, p.406.

19 P.B.Shelley : A Discourse on the Manners of the ancient Greeks (Shelley's prose; ed. David Lee Clark: Albuquerque: 1966, p.220.

20 Ibid.

In his Address to the People on the Death of Princess Charlotte he wrote, "The accident of her birth neither made her life more virtuous nor her death more worthy of grief."²¹ In this article Shelley turns the attention of the mourning people to those innumerable young and innocent women who "have perished in penury and shame, and their orphan baby has survived, a prey to the scorn and neglect of strangers."²² Shelley pointed to the callous indifference of the people to the death of poor women: "none weep for them -- none mourn for them -- none when their coffins are carried in the grave (if indeed the parish furnishes a coffin for all) turn aside and moralize upon the sadness they have left behind."²³

It was Shelley's firm conviction that man cannot be free "if woman is a slave"²⁴ and man cannot defeat the oppressors if woman is "condemned to bear scorn".²⁵ Without the help of woman man cannot accomplish the task of liberating mankind and that is why when Laon, the hero of The Revolt of Islam, finds his task difficult, the heroine Cythna comes forward and assures him of her fullest cooperation²⁶ and gives an account of her real strength.

21 P.B.Shelley: An Address to the People on the Death of Princess Charlotte; p. 165.

22 Ibid., p. 163.

23 Ibid., p. 164.

24 P.B.Shelley: The Revolt of Islam, II. XLIII, 1045.

25 Ibid: II, XLIII, 1046.

26 Shelley's feminism very much influenced the rebel poet of Bengal Kazi Nazrul Islam, who paid a glowing tribute to the role of women in making life meaningful and the dead earth a habitable globe. In his poem entitled Woman he says that man has brought the heat of day and the scorching sunshine but the woman has brought the coolness of the night, the gentle breeze and the soothing shower.

Laon, I am not weak,
 And, though my cheek might become pale the whiles
 With thee, if thou desirest, will I seek
 Through their array of branded slaves to wreak
 Ruin upon the tyrants.

(The Revolt of Islam, II, XXXIX, 1010-14)

Though Shelley had not seen the apogee of the French Revolution, he was deeply influenced by it and The Revolt of Islam shows Shelley's passion for French Revolution, his leading political and social ideas notwithstanding. At the first sight the title appears misleading since we do not find any minute delineation of Mahometan manners. The "tale is illustrative of such a Revolution as might be supposed to take place in a European nation, acted upon by the opinions of what has been called (erroneously as I think) the modern philosophy and contending with ancient notions and the supposed advantage derived from them to those who support them. It is the Revolution of this kind, that is the beau-ideal as it were of the French Revolution, but produced by the influence of individual genius and out of general knowledge."²⁷

To Shelley evil appeared to be a global phenomenon. Argolis, like Paris on the eve of the French Revolution, suffers under the evil effects of age-old tyranny of the monarch. A parallel can easily be drawn between the social and political injustices; the oppression of the King, the spiritual tyranny of the Clergy, the exploitations of the

27 Shelley to a publisher, October 13, 1817, Vol.I, p.563.

nobles and the blood-curdling atmosphere of the intellectual subservience of Argolis and that of the Pre-Revolution Paris. Shelley was very much against monarchy, clergy and nobility and he could see clearly their nefarious designs prompted out of evil motives. The state of affairs in England at that time shocked Shelley beyond measure. The death of Princess Charlotte, the heir-apparent of King George III shocked Shelley like many liberals of the time. But what shocked him more was the hanging and quartering of three poor labourers on frame-up charges of high-treason by the government. Sharing the feeling of nationwide mourning on the death of the princess, Shelley immediately wrote An Address to the People on the Death of Princess Charlotte to give vent to some of his deeper thoughts regarding the evil state of affairs all around. But the death of the princess was only the occasion for Shelley's address: "its real purpose was to arouse the nation to a sympathetic understanding of the intolerable plight of the poor, and to call attention to the fact that Englishmen had lost their time-honoured freedom to write and speak and to petition freely about their grievances."²⁸

Shelley then drew a deadly parallel between the mourning for a beautiful princess and the deep grief of a whole nation for the execution of three poor labourers on false charges by the government. Shelley forcefully made his point that in the shameful execution of these three labourers Freedom itself was murdered. "Let us follow the corpse of the

28 Davis Lee Clark: Preface to Shelley's Address to the People on the Death of Princess Charlotte, pp. 162-163.

British Liberty slowly and reverentially to its tomb; and if some glorious phantom should appear and make its throne of broken swords and sceptres and royal crown trampled in the dust, let us say that the spirit of Liberty has arisen from its grave and left all that was gross and mortal there, and kneel down and worship it as our Queen."²⁹

Shelley had expected too much of the French Revolution since it stood to champion the cause of those ideals which Shelley so fervently espoused. This poem shows how Shelley saw a better society lurking in the Revolution. In his considered opinion the bastions of monarchy, clergy and aristocracy could be trampled down through nothing short of revolution.

When first the living blood through all veins
Kindled a thought in sense, great French sprang forth
And seized, as if to break, the ponderous chains
Which bind in woe the nations of the earth.

(The Revolt of Islam, I,XXXIX, 469-72)

When the hope of a better society in France was frustrated by the bloodshed that resulted from the excess of the Revolution, many an erstwhile champions, including Wordsworth and Southey, coiled back and stood against the Revolution. But Shelley was singularly matured in the assessment of the causes of failure of the French Revolution. He was one of the few who did not confuse disease with the cause. Without abandoning his faith in revolution, he embraced the doctrine of non-violence, passive

29 P.B. Shelley: An Address to the People on the Death of Princess Charlotte; Shelley's prose work, ed. David Lee Clark, Albuquerque: 1954; p. 169.

resistance and bloodless revolution. The failure of the French Revolution shocked Shelley but it could not make him disillusioned because, unlike many supporters of the Revolution, ^{he} had no illusion about the Revolution. He did not pin too much hope on the Revolution because he had a fairly thorough knowledge of the state of affairs in pre-Revolution France. Shelley was of the opinion that it was too much to hope that the people who were degenerate a few years ago would emerge perfect immediately with the taking place of the Revolution. In forceful language Shelley declared, "Could they listen to the plea of reason who had groaned under the calamities of a social state, according to the provisions of which one man riots in luxury while another famishes for want of bread? Can he who the day before was a trampled slave, suddenly become liberal-minded, forbearing and independent? This is the consequence of the habits of a state of society to be produced by resolute perseverance and indifatigable hope and long-suffering and long-believing, courage and the sympathetic efforts of generations of men of intellect and virtue."³⁰

The Revolt of Islam shows a marked development over Queen Mab in thought-content; the idea of class conflict develops into a universal phenomenon of conflict between the good and the evil forces; the idea of liberty comes close to non-violence and bloodless revolution; the reforming tone is changed into mild revolutionary radicalism; and the passion for intellectual beauty turns into clear cut feminism.

30 P.B. Shelley: Preface to the Revolt of Islam.

In Rosalind and Helen (1817) Shelley's conception of the eradication of evil takes a new direction as the concept of love finds a new dimension. Here love is "the essence of our being, and all woe and pain arose from the war against it by selfishness, or insensibility, or mistake." (Note to Rosalind and Helen by Mrs. Shelley). So long the world has mostly been ruled by hate; Shelley tries to banish this positive evil-hatred, from human consciousness. But then immediately the question comes as to who will fill the void and who will rule the world in the absence of hate. Shelley's answer is 'Love'. So after dealing with the evil forces, Shelley moves forward with the implication of love and marriage. In a conventional loveless marriage, woman is treated as no better than chattel, however, devoted she might be to her husband. Shelley partly out of his interest in the uplift of women and partly owing to the influence of William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, advocated equality in matters of love and marriage. Lionel sincerely loves Helen but he does not have any faith in the institution of marriage. Rather he is critical of it thinking it to be a means of exploitation:

many a rite.
By men do bind out once provided,
Could not be shared by him or me
Or they would kill him in their glee.

(Rosalind and Helen: 846-49)

Helen also disapproved of marriage but her disapproval came through a long process of suffering because she had lived for sometime under the influence of orthodox system of marriage. She suffered torture and then realized

the hollowness and inhuman nature of marriage rites and she boldly gave vent to her personal choice declaring:

We will have rites our faith to bind
But our Church shall be the starry night,
Our alter the grassy earth outspread,
And our priest the muttering wind.

(851-854)

True to their heart's desire, Helen and Lionel were united but the cementing bond of their union was the sacred fire of love and not the orthodox rituals of marriage. Physically they were two different entities but emotionally they became one 'soul of inter-woven flame'. This brought a qualitative change in them and they gained new life and found themselves into a 'second birth/in worlds diviner far than earth'.

Lionel is a projection of Shelley's own personality and is a radical and revolutionary. His natural sympathies³¹ are with the have-nots and his firm conviction is in the redemption of man. Adverse circumstances of life can never tame his spirit and in the midst of odds he clings to his ideal with unshakable faith and determination.

his words could bind
Like music the lulled crowd and stem
That torrent of unquiet dream
Which mortals, truth and reason deem
But is revenge and fear and pride.

(636-640)

31 He passed amid the strife of men,
And stood at the throne of armed power
Pleading for a world of we;
Secure as one on a rock-built tower
O'er the wrecks which the surge trials to and fro,
'Mid the passions wild of human kind
He stood, like a spirit calming them:

(629-635)

As to why Shelley portrayed Lionel after his own image and what he wanted to convey through this portrayal, Carl Grabe remarks "Shelley, by the force of circumstances and defects and virtues of his own nature, led a tragic life, a life which gave him insight into the darkness of the human heart. Coldness, selfishness and cruelty he found more prevalent than love. To one whose heart went out in loving sympathy to all things, the realization of its weakness, of its loneliness against odds too great for it, was bewildering, shattering. Shelley for a time indulged in self-pity and got some consolation in creating characters which are himself enlarged, more successful in the role of his choice, that of poet-reformer, and suffering a greater and more spectacular martyrdom. He achieves ultimately of greater impersonality, perceiving in his own sufferings but an instance of the law exemplified on the heroic plane by Christ and Prometheus that those who give the most and love the world unselfishly suffer the most from the world's neglect and cruelty."³²

32 Carl Grabe: *op.cit.*, p.236.

Chapter - VII

THE FOURTH PHASE (1818-1819)

In March 1818, Shelley hurriedly left England and reached Italy. Whether Shelley left England to save his skin from some of his creditors as alleged by some of his critics or out of extreme frustration, the fact remains that at that time he had no idea that he would not return to England any more. Of course his journey to Italy proved to be a blessing in disguise because it was in Italy where his genius came "all at once into bloom"¹ and his poetry which "before was propagandist and edifying"² became more truly philosophical. Commenting on the influence of Italy on Shelley Carl Graho observes the "esthetic effect of Italy upon him was profound. Peacock had awakened in him a taste for music and opera but Shelley seemed to have cared little for painting, sculpture and architecture until the museums and ruins of Italy, no less than the scenery, discovered in him new depths of perception and appreciation."³

1 Carl Graho, The Magic Plant: Oxford; 1965, p.230.

2 Ibid., p. 231.

3 Ibid.

Lins Written Among the Eugenic Hills (1818) is a turning point in Shelley's mode of thinking so far as his idea of evil is concerned. At this stage we discern in Shelley a belated triumph of optimism over pessimism. In Queen Mab he felt genuinely sorry to see the ruins of the kingdoms of the bygone days -- Palmyra, Athens, etc. But in this poem he overcomes the initial shock and frustration and dives deeply to find out the causes of such degeneration. He realizes that selfishness is a positive evil and that selfishness combined with indifference to one's fellow-beings have turned this world into the 'wide sea of Misery'. He forcefully opines that to make life meaningful and to turn this mass of revolving clay into a habitable globe 'love' and 'friendship' are pre-conditions.

What, if there no friends will greet;
 What, if there no heart will meet
 His with love's impatient beat;
 Wander wheresoe'er he may,
 Can he dream before that day
 To find refuge from distress
 In friendship's smile in love's caress?

(Lins Written Among the Eugenic Hills, 27-33)

The reality of tyranny, especially physical tyranny, represented by King and his agents, is a lifelong obsession with Shelley and even while describing different objects of Nature, his imagery conveys the sense of kingly tyranny: the sea-mews sailing over the bellows of the gale, or the up and down howling of the whirlwind suggest the domination

of the strong over the weak. The phenomenon is... like a slaughtered town,

When a king in glory rides
Through the pomp of fratricide.

(Ibid., 57-59)

At the sight of Venice, the passion for freedom glows anew in Shelley. The past and the departed glory of the city are immediately conjured up in Shelley and he makes the 'pollution-nourished' people of Venice aware of their degenerate state and urges them to rise and regain their real freedom:

Where a hundred cities lie
Chained like thee, ingloriously,
Thou and all thy sister band
Might adorn this sunny land,
Twining memories of old time
With new virtues more sublime.

(Ibid., 154-159)

He makes a pointed reference to 'many domed Padua' (215) where 'the sickle to the sword/Lies unchanged' (225-226). He broods over the cause of degeneration of Padua and is convinced of the fact that slavery and darkness brought about sin among the people of Padua. Here Shelley's conviction and political creed find poignant and articulate expression:

Men must reap the things they sow,
Force from force must ever flow,
Or worse; but 'tis bitter wee
That love or reason cannot change
The despot's rage, and the slave's revenge.

(Ibid., 231-235)

It is an irony that such a philanthropist, as Shelley was, is portrayed as one who abhorred the masses; and the portrayal is based on a single line of this poem -- 'The polluting multitude (356). "In the first place", wrote Ellsworth Barnard, "he did not believe in the natural goodness of human nature. His ideal humanity was a beautiful vision, but for men and women in the mass he had little sympathy."⁴ But before accepting such sweeping generalisation, we must remember that any judgment based on a single line, that too taken out of context, is bound to be erroneous. To make a correct assessment of Shelley's attitude towards mankind, we should consider the whole gamut of his creative work and then we will immediately see that his feeling towards the masses was one of deep and genuine sympathies. This particular poem also is expressive of Shelley's prophetic vision, his views "on the fate of Venice, on the University of Padua, on freedom and tyranny"⁵ and shows his passion for freedom and protest against tyranny.

Though Shelley and Byron had few characteristics in common, even then they mutually influenced each other to a great extent and Julian and Maddalo (1818) is a record of Shelley's second meeting with Byron at Venice in August 1818, the poem being an unmistakable expression of Shelley's optimism. The characters of Julian and Maddalo are placed in

4 Ellsworth Barnard; Shelley's Religion: New York; 1964, p. 112.

5 Edmund Blunden; Shelley - A Life Story: Oxford; 1965, p. 177.

juxtaposition. Julian is "an Englishman of good family, passionately attached to those philosophical notions which assert the power of man over his own mind, and the immense improvements of which, by the extinction of certain moral superstitions, human society may yet be susceptible."⁶ He endeavours to find ways and means to make the good triumph over evil. Maddalo, on the other hand, is a "Venetian nobleman of ancient family and of good fortune.... But it is his weakness to be proud; he derives, from a comparison of his own extraordinary mind with the dwarfish intellects that surround him, an intense apprehension of the nothingness of human life."⁷ These two characters in the poem, i.e., Julian and Maddalo are Shelley and Byron respectively with their distinctive characteristics.

Unlike Byron Shelley was a champion of the doctrine of the freedom of the will. Shelley, in the guise of Julian, discards the idea that the divine and eternal aspirations of the human soul are mere delusions. He does not deny the importance of Necessity but he boldly asserts that man can be chained to Necessity only by the permission of his will. If this will is strengthened, man can attain lofty ideals. Maddalo is sceptic and he speaks of human destiny in a pessimistic vein; but Julian professes the doctrine of the freedom of the will:

... if man be
The passive thing you say, I should not see
Much harm in the religions and old saws

6 Preface to Julian and Maddalo, p.190.

7 Ibid., p.189.

(Tho I may never own such leaden laws)
Which break a teachless nature to the yoke
Mine is another faith.

(Julian and Maddalo, 160-165)

Shelley moves a step further and declares that it is the individual will which will determine whether men shall free themselves from all sorts of tyranny or will remain eternal slaves. Political and social tyranny, the abuses of wealth and all sorts of organised evil exist simply because men permit them to exist.

... it is our will
That thus enchains us to permitted ill --
We might be otherwise -- we might be all
We dream of happy, high, majestic.

(*Ibid.*, 170-173)

These lines of Shelley have given a very good handle to his critics who tried to prove that Shelley's idea about the origin of evil as well as his suggestion for remedying evil is superficial and puerile and contended that the above-quoted lines betray Shelley's lack of proper understanding of the forces working in human societies. Unfortunately Mary Shelley's note to Prometheus Unbound also supported this mistaken approach to Shelley's theory of evil. "The prominent features of the Shelley's theory of the destiny of human species," writes Mary Shelley, "was that evil is not inherent in the system of creation, but an accident that might be expelled. Shelley believed that mankind had only to will

that there would be no evil, and there would be none. That man could be so perfectionized as to be able to expel evil from his own nature, and from the greater part of the creation, was the cardinal point of his system."⁸ But a serious study of Shelley's Queen Mab, The Revolt of Islam, and Prometheus Unbound will show that Shelley never so lightly dismissed evil by suggesting that it could be removed by one stroke. On the contrary he said on many occasions that of the two broad divisions of evil, the subjective evil (i.e., evil which emanates from man) could to a great extent be minimized with the concerted and conscientious effort of man but that too would take a long time and even the conception of time should be changed before the disappearance of that evil. But about the other type of evil, i.e., the objective type, which befalls mankind, Shelley said that nothing could be done to minimise it, not to speak of to eliminate it. Of course when we pass from Queen Mab and The Revolt of Islam to Prometheus Unbound we notice a positive change in Shelley's stand so far as his attitude towards the problem of evil is concerned. In Queen Mab and The Revolt of Islam Shelley believes in the environmental theory of the origin of evil as put forward by Godwin, Tom Paine and others but in Prometheus Unbound he gives a metaphysical twist to the treatment of evil mainly under the influence of Plato. Shelley also tried to give a Platonic interpretation to the doctrine that evil is, at least partially, subjective. Man himself creates darkness which in turn immerses him and consumes the 'Heaven's light'

8 Mary Shelley: Note to Prometheus Unbound, p.

in its darkness.

For Love, and beauty and delight,
There is no death nor change; their might
Excels our organs, which endure
No light, being themselves obscure.

(The Sensitive Plant, Conclusion)

The British government used to boast of the freedom of its people and the ignorant masses were also made to believe that the freedom they enjoyed was unthinkable to any other race under the Sun. But Shelley, like many reformers of his time, was fully aware of the miserable plight and the inhuman level of existence of the poor of England. Ridiculing the doctrine of Malthus that the evils of the poor arise from an excess of population, Shelley paints a realistic picture of the common man of England when in A Philosophical View of Reform he writes, "they have been stript naked by the tax-gatherer and reduced to bread and tea and fourteen hours of hard labour by their masters... The frost has bitten their defenceless limbs, and the cramp has wrung like a disease within their bones, and hunger has stamped the ferocity of want like the mask of Cain upon their countenance...."⁹ In Lines Written During the Castlereagh Administration (1819) Shelley exposes the cant of the rulers and ridicules the pernicious effects of so-called freedom of the British people. He makes a scathing attack on the oppressors for their despotic atrocities:

⁹ A Philosophical View of Reform, p.247.

Corpses are cold in the tomb;
 Stones on the pavement are dumb;
 Abortions are dead in the womb,
 And their mothers look pale -- like the death-white shore
 Of Albion, free no more.

(Lines Written During Castlereagh
Administration, 1-5)

The masses are 'of senseless clay'(7) and they are 'stones in the way'(6) and Liberty is 'smitten to death'(10). The oppressor is the 'sole lord and possessor / Of her corpses'(13-14). The Aristocracy hears the 'festival din'/ Of Death and Destruction, and Sin'(16-17). Wealth cries 'Havoc' and it is 'the Bacchanal triumph which makes truth dumb. In a sarcastic tone Shelley heaps curses on the tyrannical monarch:

Ay, marry thy ghostly wife;
 Let Fear and Disquiet and Strife
 Spread thy couch in the chamber of Life;
 Marry Ruin, thou Tyrant; and Hell be thy guide
 To the bed of the bride:

(Ibid., 21-25)

The patience of Shelley seems to have come to an end, his horror and disgust at the sight of oppression all around having reached great height. In Song to the Men of England, Shelley for the first time gives an open call for revolution by asking the masses of the producing class stand against those of the possessing class. Antedating Karl Marx by a few decades, Shelley boldly declares that the workers should have the right to consume what they produce. Without mincing matters he asks in the very opening paragraphs:

Men of England, wherefore plough
 For the lords who lay ye low?
 Wherefore weave with toil and care,
 The rich robes your tyrants wear?

Wherefore feed, and clothe and save,
 From the cradle to the grave,
 Those ungrateful drones who would
 Drain your sweat -- nay, drink your blood!

(Song to the Men of England, 1-8)

The toiling masses have no 'leisure', 'comfort', 'calm',
 'shelter', 'food' or 'love's gentle balm' because they always produce
 but seldom consume:

The seed ye sow, another reaps;
 The wealth ye find, another keeps;
 The robes ye weave, another wears;
 The arms ye forge, another bears.

(Ibid., 17-20)

Very reasonably and predictably Shelley's sympathies go to the
 proletariat. He tries to bring it to their consciousness that they are
 the real producers of national wealth and as such they should stand
 against parasites and demand their legitimate rights as mere begging
 or appealing won't persuade the aristocracy to part with their excess
 and share it with the have nots:

Sow seed, -- but let no tyrant reap;
 Find wealth, -- let no imposter heap;
 Weave robes, -- let not the idle wear;
 Forge arms, -- in your defence to bear.

(Ibid., 21-24)

Shelley's profound concern over the exploitation of the toiling people is an enigma to many. It is a mystery as to how he could transcend his aristocratic heritage and cling to socialistic thought. This culmination in him might have come through his objective experience and subjective analysis of the currents and cross-currents responsible for social changes. His enthusiasm for economic liberty of the labouring class shows that his socialistic creed was born of deep conviction and reasoning.

In Fragment: To the People of England (1819) Shelley shows in unmistakable print his socialistic bent of mind. He draws the extremes of squalor and splendour, labour and idleness. It is a strange irony that the labourers 'toil' and 'groan' in suffocating oppression of those very parasites whom they nurse 'from the cradle to the grave'. It is befitting the exploiting class that they repay the unique service rendered to them by the labourers with blood-curdling torture and inhuman exploitation. Shelley was a life-long hater of monarchy and aristocracy but his rage against those ~~harm~~ becomes scathingly bitter and vehement in Sennet: England in 1819. The poem starts on a high pitch with Shelley making an ~~important~~ attack on the King George III who is 'An old, mad, blind, despised and dying King', (1) as well as on the Princess who is 'the dregs of their dull race, who flow/Through public scorn -- mud from a muddy spring'(2-3). They are insensible and heartless rulers 'who neither see, nor feel, nor knew'(4) but who suck the blood from the pale bodies of their famished subject. They are indifferent to the 'people starved and

stabbed in the untilled field'(7). Shelley exhibits a wide awareness of the corruption of the man-made institutions:

An army, which liberticide and prey
 Makes as a two-edged sword to all who wield, --
 Golden and sanguine laws which tempt and slay;
 Religion Christless, Godless -- a book sealed;
 A Senate, -- Time's worst statute unrepealed, --
 Are graves, from which a glorious phantom may
 Burst, to illumine our tempestuous day.

(England in 1819, 8-14)

Notwithstanding the pretext of the colonial countries to justify the maintenance of their colonies, Shelley could very clearly see the various evils associated with colonisation. An Ode : Written in October 1819 is a unique expression of Shelley's understanding of the evils of colonisation which proves his sagacity in judging the importance of freedom in the development of a nation. As on earlier occasions he sided with the oppressed people, here also he ^{stands} ~~stood~~ firmly by the side of the slave countries and ^{pleads} ~~pleaded~~ immediate granting of freedom to such countries. The very thought of the dawn of liberty in Spain ^{moves} ~~moved~~ him to white heat with ^{ecstasy} ~~ecstasy~~ and made him celebrate his happiness in this poem. To the Spaniards Shelley unmasks their oppressors who have slain 'Your sons, your wives, your brethren'(6), urges them to rise against their oppressors and clearly reminds them that 'There is blood' on the earth that denies ye 'bread'(2). Though Shelley asks them to raise their banner high in defence of freedom, he does not, unlike in his poem Song to the Men of England, give a call for armed revolt. Rather in a mild way he suggests that the Spaniards should use 'hope', both as the weapon and as the

shield, in their just struggle for freedom.

Bind, bind every brow
With crownals of violet, ivy, and pine;
Hide the blood-stains now
With hues which sweet Nature has made divind.

(Written in October 1819, 29-32)

Confronted with the problem of resolving the contradiction between his inherent rebellious nature and his rather gentlemanly reformist approach, Shelley needed some manifestation of the analogies in the natural world by which to confirm his profound conviction that "regeneration follows destruction, that change does not mean extinction, and that there is yet hope for the world if it will pay heed to those unacknowledged legislators, the prophetic poets."¹⁰ And hence the composition of the Ode to the West Wind (1819) which is hailed even to day as the best specimen of consummate art and lyricism and emotional fervour.

Of late Shelley has come to realize that revolutionary process of change destroys evil as well as good because the society itself is interwoven with the opposite threads of evil and good: 'Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst' and shatter the calm of the Blue Mediterranean -- an emblem of peace -- near Baia's bay which had been a scene of "social splendour, amenity and injustice."¹¹ The unique role of the west wind is that it is both destroyer as well as preserver. It is the west wind

10 Carlos Baker: Shelley's Major Poetry: Princeton; 1948, p.201.

11 H.H.Fogle: The Imaginal design of Shelley's Ode to the West Wind: Journal of English Literary History, Vol.15, No.3 (1948), p.223.

'from whose unseen presence the leaves dead/Are driven, like ghosts'¹²
from an enchanter fleeing.'(2-3).

While composing Ode to the West Wind Shelley was going through cruciating experience and he was all the time trying to boost his spirit as he believed that one is never defeated until he admits defeat. "By the time he left England in March 1818 his political disillusionment, began in 1812 at the time of his experiences among the Irish, had been completed by the personal disaster of 1817 when the Lord Chancellor had ruled that owing to his views he was unfit to bring up the two children of his first marriage. From then on the poet in him, somewhat overlaid in the past by the political and theological enquirer, began to come into his own and into the poetry now went the crusading zeal formerly diverted into ever-ambitious or quixotic attempts at practical social reform."¹³ One of the reasons of Shelley's sudden departure to Italy was that he was terribly apprehensive that of the two surviving children born to Mary, one having died in England, might be lost to Lord Chancellor as Harriet's children had been lost. But that did not help; Clara died and the Shelleys received profound shock when "... without warning, three-year-old William, delight of his parents, fell ill of an intestinal disorder and died too."¹⁴

12 Here Shelley reverses the popular simile. In reality the enchanter is seen and the ghosts are unseen. But here the enchanter (the West Wind) is unseen and the ghosts (dead leaves) are seen.

13 Neville Rogers: Shelley at Work; Oxford; 1967, p.212.

14 Ibid., p.213.

All these sad developments, both outer and inner, made a qualitative change in Shelley's thought process. He superseded Godwinism and other eighteenth century doctrines by Platonism, giving to Platonic notion of 'love' the place of supreme importance in his scheme. Stretching the point to the logical culmination; Rogers points out that, "The Prometheus who triumphs over tyranny after abjuring vengeance is the Shelley of late 1819, bowed beneath his sorrows yet recovering his courage secure in the conviction that good can triumph over evil and love over hate and tortures and that so long as the human will remains strong the hour of triumph will come round just as the seasons come round in turn."¹⁵

The West Wind is both destroyer and preserver and wind itself is the symbol of life -- animating forces and naturally it has a peculiar attraction for Shelley. His prayer to west wind to make him its lyre shows his eagerness to awaken the oppressed. He implores the Wind to lift him as a wave, a leaf, a cloud (all symbols of himself) because, says he, 'I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed.'¹⁶ Shelley then goes a step further and requests the wind to

15 N.Rogers: op.cit.; p.212.

16 Though T.S.Eliot dismisses the line as banal and prosaic, Shelley miserably failing in the art of communicating his feelings through the technique of 'objective correlative', I think he was rather unkind to Shelley deliberately neglecting the subtle touch of self-abnegation and the merger of the individual 'ego' into a larger unity.

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth! (63-64)

"'New birth', as we know, was a phrase very near the top of Shelley's consciousness in those late October days of 1819: Mary's child, the future Percy Florence Shelley, his second name not lightly given, was born on 12 November and, just as a new child had come to defy the 'swift and sudden spirit of decay' which had taken William, so Shelley's poetry would re-arise, regenerated in time as 'Earth's decaying leaves' were regenerated by the season."¹⁷

As to these 'dead thoughts' we get some idea from his Prometheus Unbound and A Philosophical View of Reform. His main object was to 'Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth/Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind'(66-67). Shelley throughout his life tried to eliminate one of the most rampant of all evils which was ignorance and because of his prophetic bent of mind, he wishes to make his poetry 'The Trumpet of a Prophecy' -- prophecy of how the degenerate humanity will achieve emancipation and regeneration. He always endeavours to hold the hope to the oppressed by making them conscious of the Necessitarian Law that evil is not permanent and that it is inevitably followed by good, that destruction is succeeded by creation and that oppression is succeeded by liberty. His optimism reaches its ^{acme} ~~form~~ when he writes 'when winter comes, spring cannot lag far behind' and he gives this line a supreme lyrical

17 N.Rogers: op.cit., p.227.

excellence by re-writing it as 'If winter comes, can spring be far behind?'

Even the minor poems of this period, though some of them are no better than "sentimental album-pieces",¹⁸ show that there is heart-felt compassion as well as indignation compassion for the oppressed and indignation against the oppressor. These pieces also show that "Shelley loved the people; and respected them as often more virtuous, as always more suffering, and therefore more deserving of sympathy than the great."¹⁹ Mary Shelley has rightly observed that Shelley "believed that a clash between the two classes of society was inevitable, and he eagerly ranged himself on the people's side."²⁰

The Cenci (1819), in spite of Shelley's assertion that it is written "without any of the peculiar feelings and opinions which characterise my other compositions,"²¹ contains his ideas about parental tyranny, incestuous passion, religious hypocrisy, and the evils of power and pelf. Although he has tried to put aside "The presumptuous attitude of an instructor,"²² there is moral instruction even in the Preface to The Cenci: "The fit return to make the most enormous injuries is kindness and forbearance, and a resolution to convert the injurer from his dark passions by peace and love."²³

18 Desmond King-Hale: Shelley: His Thought and Work: Macmillan; 1974, p.234.

19 Note by Mrs. Shelley on Poems of 1819, p.588.

20 Ibid.

21 Shelley to T.L.Peacock, July 20, 1819, Vol. II, p.102.

22 The Cenci - Dedication to Hunt, p.275.

23 Preface to The Cenci, p.276.

The Cenci adds a new dimension to Shelley's concept of evil. In The Cenci Shelley for the first time accepted, and never later on rejected, the idea that good and evil cannot be separated into watertight compartments and he took a modern view of the problem when he realized that there is good in evil and evil in good. Apparently "Cenci is all evil, and Beatrice and Lucretia represent the good."²⁴ But a deeper insight will reveal that the evil-incarnate Count Cenci has many good qualities; he is brave, courageous, spirited, undaunted and possesses sufficient manly vigour. On the other hand, Beatrice, the embodiment of beauty and innocence, is not fully devoid of vices; she is shockingly outspoken and revengeful and she incites her mother to assist her in her inhuman design of parricide. "The young maiden, who was urged to this tremendous deed by an impulse which overpowered its horror, was evidently a most gentle and amiable being; a creature formed to ~~adore~~ adore and be admired, and thus violently thwarted from her nature by the necessity of circumstances and opinion."²⁵

Shelley represents the opposite elements of good and evil through the introduction of historical characters though his knowledge of history was not based on objectivity because the history he read about the Cencis was wrong history and the supposed portrait of Beatrice which he was moved to see was not her portrait actually. Count Cenci has brought
[^]'perilous
~~'perilous'~~ impunity' with his gold; his 'desperate and remorseless method'

24 M.T.Solve, Shelley: His Theory of Poetry: New York; 1964, p.30.

25 Preface to The Cenci, p.276.

and dishonoured age/Charged with a thousand unrepented crimes' have been directed towards nothing except 'lust, pleasure' and 'honey sweet' and in utter disregard to the law of the land with unholy blessings from the connivance of the Church, he gets his two sons murdered for their impudence and rapes of his daughter, Beatrice, for opposing and exposing him.

Significantly Beatrice, her brother, Bernardo and step-mother, Lucretia, stand united against their common oppressor. Their innocence and virtue have no effect on Cenci, who cannot be converted from his wickedness by peace and love. Their suggestions fail to pacify his 'dark and bloody' designs; on the contrary, they augment his high-handedness. When Beatrice appeals to the guests of the great banquet for help and exposes the evil-nature of her father, who has thrown this party to rejoice at the murder of his two recalcitrant(?) sons, Count Cenci is infuriated and his 'firm', 'cold', 'subtle' villainy sets to work, he returns Beatrice's suggestion for becoming a loving and generous father by inflicting mental as well as physical tortures on her.

There is a conflict between the strong and the weak -- the great war between the old and the young²⁶ -- and the tyrant is not converted into a

26 In the great war between the old and the young
I, who have white hairs and a tottering body
Will keep at least blameless neutrality.

(The Cenci, Act II, Scene ff, 38-40)

benevolent man but killed by the young and consequently, the oppressed and the young suffer under the injuries of the law and Church, which are controlled by the old and the powerful. Not only that, the two institutions are in league with the tyrants; the Church survives on the mercy and flourishes on the money of the rich and the old who inflict pain and punishment on the young and the weak, and manage to get a clean-chit from all evils by paying money.

That palace walking devil Gold
Has whispered silence to his Holiness.

(The Cenci, Act II, Scene ii, 68-69)

Pope, controlling both 'Law' and the Church, is in no mood to listen to the predicament of Beatrice caused by her father and he orders the outright execution of Beatrice on the charge of parricide, her innocence notwithstanding.

Parricide grows so rife,
That soon for some just cause no doubt the young
Will strangle us all, dozing our chairs,
Authority, and power, and hoary hair
Are grown crimes capital.

(The Cenci, Act V, Scene iv, 20-24)

The wild lamentations of Beatrice on hearing the order of her execution make us shockingly conscious of the miserable plight of the innocent in this life and the lack of hope for them in the life beyond.

I

Have met with much injustice in this world;
 No difference has been made by God or men,
 Or any power moulding my wretched lot,
 'Twixt good or evil, as regarded me.

(Ibid.)

Beatrice meets with her tragic end not because she has any dearth of virtue or good qualities but simply because, unlike Prometheus, her evil within is not conquered by good; her revenge is not subdued by Love.

Thus The Cenci shows Shelley's firm conviction that social, political and religious institutions are designed to maintain the supremacy of the powerful, the oppressors, and the old over the weak, the oppressed, and the young.

Shelley's Song of Experience,²⁷ Prometheus Unbound (1819) marks a radical departure from Aeschylus' version of the legend because Shelley had "boundless faith in the perfectibility of man".²⁸ Shelley at places

27 Prof. Tillyard in his book entitled Milton mentions Prometheus Unbound as Shelley's Song of Innocence. But S.U.Khan refutes the arguments of Prof. Tillyard and opines that Shelley's Queen Mab is his Song of Innocence and that one of his two Songs of Experience is Prometheus Unbound. "He never went back on his revolutionary principles like Wordsworth, Coleridge or Southey but his approach to man and to the problem of evil underwent complete transformation by the time he wrote Prometheus Unbound. If we consider this lyrical drama as Shelley's Song of Innocence, which is, in fact, Shelley's one of the two Songs of Experience it means that we do not recognise the rapid growth of his maturing mind. It is a common mistake, to quote Mr. Spender, to remember the boy of eighteen who wrote Queen Mab without remembering the man of twenty-nine who remarked: 'If I die tomorrow, I have lived to be older than my father'. My submission, therefore, is that Prometheus Unbound is Shelley's Song of Experience..." S.U.Khan: Shelley's Song of Experience: Milton and the Devils Party and other Essays; Allgarh 1969, p.39.

28 C.H.Herford; Shelley in the Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol.12, p.64.

altered the story of Prometheus to fit his social, political and religious ideas into it. He did not appreciate Aeschylus's treatment of the plot of Prometheus especially the end was farthest from Shelley's scheme of things and he accused Aeschylus of 'arbitrary discretion' in Prometheus Bound where Prometheus is reconciled to Zeus. Shelley was "averse from a catastrophe so feeble as that of reconciling the champion with the oppressor of Mankind."²⁹ The only ^{way} ~~was~~ that the oppressed can end the oppression of the oppressor is by perseverance and fortitude and never by weak and meek appeals to the tyrants. That is why Shelley vindicates the stand of Prometheus in not surrendering to Zeus in spite of prolonged inhuman torture. Prometheus is the champion of man and he should not speak or act in a manner which is below his dignity. "The moral interest of the fable, which is so powerfully sustained by the sufferings and endurance of Prometheus, would be annihilated if we could conceive of him as unsaying his high language and quailing before his successful and perfidious adversary."³⁰ Prometheus remains in torment until the time is ripe for Demogorgon to overthrow his father; and after the downfall of Jupiter, Prometheus is unbound by Hercules. Apparently it seems that the great change comes without notice or any preparation on the part of man. But to know the process of this tremendous change we are to take note of the profound influence of Plato and especially his concept of 'love' on Shelley. The yesterday of man was bright but the today is dark and abysmal, because it is the principle of hate and the manifestation of

29 Preface to Prometheus Unbound, p.205.

30 Ibid.

revenge which guide man's activities. And hence, to attain the new age of perfection man must forget 'Hatred' and allow 'Love' to dominate instead. There is a qualitative change in Prometheus; now he cannot hate even an arch enemy and oppressor, Jupiter; on the contrary, he has all love for him. Previously he hurled curses on Jupiter; but now he wants to withdraw those curses to make them ineffective:

... for I hate no more,
As then ere misery made me wise. The curse
Once breathed on thee I would recall.

(Prometheus Unbound, Act I, 57-59)

And Prometheus further continues in the same vein:

Grief for awhile is blind, and so was mine,
I wish no living thing to suffer pain.

(Ibid., 304-305)

Since he has forgotten those curses, he requests the elements of the Earth to tell him what the curse was

... If then my words had power,
Though I am changed so that aught evil wish
Is dead within; although no memory be
Of what is hate, let them not lose it now.

(Ibid., 60-72)

Unlike his previous stand, the present stand of Shelley in according the highest place to 'Love' and 'Forgiveness' has a close resemblance to the Christian concept of 'love' and 'forgiveness'. He had once denounced Christianity, Christ and God as evils which debased man's mind but now he

ferverently believed in the intensely Christian ethics of forgiveness of injuries and the necessity of opposing brute force by spiritual resistance. By this time he was able to distinguish between the temporal evil God, Jupiter, and the One or the Eternal God. Jupiter was the creation of man's own mind and was the symbol of that accumulated religious corruption which has viciously manipulated the enslavement of man's mind and spirit and trampled upon his happiness. Man had worshipped this evil God for centuries and the only record had been 'fear, self contempt and barren hope'. It was against this evil God that Prometheus, the mind of man and the symbol of suffering humanity, had revolted. The One or the Eternal God was the benevolent source of all life in this Universe; the unconquerable, without which the fierce omnipotence of Jove would have obliterated humanity and the populous earth."³¹

Shelley hated religion in general and Christianity in particular and though he did not fully bracket Christ with Christianity, he had no high opinion about Christ either. But of late "Shelley had learnt to love and respect Christ and look upon him as the apostle of truth, peace and pity."³²

One came forth of gentle worth
Smiling on the sanguine earth.

(Prometheus Unbound, Act I, 546-547)

Shelley's deep love of Christ inspired the memorable lines which were spoken by Prometheus on beholding the emblem of crucified Christ.

31 S.U.Khan, op.cit., p.51

32 Ibid.

Remit the anguish of that lighted stare,
 Close those wan lips; let that thorn-wounded brow
 Stream not with blood...

(Prometheus Unbound, 553-555)

Shelley could see through the nasty design of the clergy in distorting the teaching of Christ. In A Philosophical View of Reform Shelley wrote, "Names borrowed from the life and opinions of Jesus Christ were employed as symbols of domination and imposture, and a system of liberty and equality (for such was the system preached by the great Reformer) was perverted to support oppression -- not his doctrines, for they are too simple and direct to be susceptible of such perversion, but the mere names. Such was the origin of the Catholic Church, which, together with the several dynasties then beginning to consolidate themselves in Europe, means, being interpreted, a plan according to which the cunning and selfish few have employed the fears and hopes of the ignorant many to the establishment of their own power as the destruction of the real interest of all."³³

Prometheus Unbound makes a positive departure so far as Shelley's concept of evil is concerned. Shelley dives deep into the problem and realizes that there are two distinct types of evil -- the objective and the subjective; the one which befalls us and the other which emanates from us. Commenting on this singular development of Shelley Mr. S.U.Khan

33 A Philosophical View of Reform: Shelley's Prose, ed. David Lee Clark; Albuquerque: 1954, pp. 230-231.

remarks: "Shelley had believed in the immediacy of social and political reform because he considered evil to be an external burden which could be eradicated by external change. His pantheistic and Manicheistic explanations of the existence of evil were only passing references. In Prometheus Unbound Shelley realized that evil is the creation of man's own mind. To ameliorate the condition of suffering humanity, man must transform himself. He must replace hate with love and conquer his self to enable him to forgive his enemies. Unless this happens, man will remain divorced from the great and benevolent power Love which was the active principle behind the universe."³⁴ In his preface Shelley also points to the something "... until the mind can love, and admire, and trust, and hope, and endure, reasoned principles of moral conduct are seeds cast upon the highway of life, which the unconscious passenger tramples into dust..."³⁵

In Prometheus Unbound various shades of evil are there: metaphysical as well as political and social. On completing the first act Shelley writes "I consider poetry very subordinate to moral and political science, and if it were well, certainly I should aspire to the latter; for I can conceive a great work, embodying the discoveries of all ages, and harmonizing the contending creeds by which mankind have been ruled."³⁶ Cameron pointed out that "Although it has long been recognised that there is a certain political content to Prometheus Unbound, there has, so far,

34 S.U.Khan: op.cit., pp.52-53.

35 Preface to Prometheus Unbound.

36 Shelley to F.L. Peacock, January 24, 1819, Vol.II, p.71.

been no attempt to make a consistent interpretation of it in terms of this content"³⁷ and he made a deep probe into this poem to extract its socio-political thought. There is a pointed reference to the French Revolution as to how the love of freedom led the French to stand against despotism of monarchy and Clergy who tried to blight the prospect of liberty, equality and fraternity. But the Revolution failed because the motto was not clear and destructive elements like hatred and revenge were the guiding force and consequently the enthusiasm soon turned into fratricidal conflict in which blood flowed like water.

The picture is also suggestive of contemporary France and England where the rich and the privileged oppressed and exploited the poor and the weak. The furies in the drama represent "all the statellites and agents of court and State by means of which -- as well as by its armies -- the ruling aristocratic class kept itself in power."³⁸ They scattered chaos everywhere and filled the hearts of the masses with pain, fear, disappointment and mistrust. Consequently, the agents of monarchy and religion began to

Track all things that weep, and bleed, and live,
When the great King betrays them to our will.

(Prometheus Unbound, Act I, 456-57)

Wars with other countries are the machinations of these social
parasites and drones; constant warfare has resulted in the National Debt

37 K.N.Cameron: The Political Symbolism of Prometheus Unbound in Shelley--Modern Judgements, ed. R.B.Woodings, Macmillan: 1868, p.102.

38 K.N. Cameron: op.cit., p.105.

and ultimately the oppressed and the poor had to bear the brunt of that. 'When Rome burns, Nero fiddles' and when cities sink howling in ruin 'the earthly tyrants' reverberates hills with the scream of their mirth and revelry.

Jupiter represents tyranny. He tortures Prometheus. But Jupiter had no power and ironically it was Prometheus who endowed Jupiter with power. When Mercury, an agent of Jupiter, comes to Prometheus and requests him to purchase his release by surrendering before Jupiter and telling him the secret about Jupiter's fall which Prometheus alone knows, Prometheus of Shelley, unlike Prometheus of Aeschylus, firmly and politely replies:

Evil minds

Change good to their own nature. I gave all
He has; and in return he chains me here...

(Prometheus Unbound, Act I, 380-382)

Jupiter's tyranny can be given a political interpretation and his rule may be supposed to be symbolical of the tyrannical rule of Matternich, Castlereagh and their surrogates, because their cruelty would have put Jupiter to shame. Thus for Shelley, the pre-condition of building up a new social order is that the great evil, monarchy, should be done away with. The moment monarchy becomes a thing of the past, other evils like hate, disdain, self-love and self-content will also become things of the past. The new dispensation is without the hierarchy

of monarchs and aristocrats.

Thrones, altars, judgement-seats, and prisons; wherein,
And beside which, by wretched men were born
Sceptres, tiaras, swords, and chains, and tombs
Of reasoned wrong, glozed on by ignorance,
Where like these monstrosous and barbaric shapes,
The ghosts of a no-more-remembered fame,
Which, from their unworn obelisks, look forth
In triumph over the palaces and tombs
Of those who were their conquerors.

(Ibid., Act III, iv, 164-72).

The Foul shapes of the manifestations of the various
social, political and religious institutions, abhorred by both God and
man, were worshipped 'under many a name and many a form/Strange, savage,
ghastly, dark and execrable. But with the advent of the golden age the
loathsome mask of hypocrisy and injustice will fall away from the face
of things and Man will remain

Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man
Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless;
Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the King
Over himself; just, gentle, wise.

(Ibid., 193-96)

Shelley's ideal of a perfect society based on love, equality and
freedom is feasible only when Man is equal, unclassed, tribeless and
nationless. Under particular circumstances Shelley accepted non-violence,
but the doctrine of non-resistance to evil is infused in Prometheus
Unbound; the titan 'nailed' to the wall of eagle-baffling mountains'
for thirty thousand years of 'sleep-unsheltered hours', suffers untold

misery, physical as well as mental. Prometheus Unbound affirms Shelley's faith in valiantly standing against tyranny and oppression. The liberation of man will be brought about gradually and peacefully and, under the influence of Hope and Faith, the earth will become a happy and peaceful abode of equal and unselfish men.

Since in his scheme of things Love occupies the central position, Shelley advocates women's cooperation in the freedom movement, because, woman, for him, was a symbol of Love. For Prometheus Asia is Love incarnate and immediately at the sight of Asia, Panthea and Ione, he forgets his own suffering:

How fair these airborne shapes; and yet I feel
Most vain all hope but love; and thou art far Asia.

(Prometheus Unbound, Act I, 807-809)

Woman in Shelley's scheme always performs an active and positive role and is never at the receiving end only. She is a sharer of man's pains and pleasures. Since love exists only when there are feelings of generous comradeship and equality, Shelley's ideal society is inhabited by equal men and women. Thus in Prometheus Unbound Shelley shows how Asia was separated from Prometheus -- period of suffering in solitude -- and how her union with Prometheus brought about his smooth release.

Prometheus Unbound is undoubtedly a proof of Shelley's maturity of thought. Shelley believes that if man-made institutions are changed for the better and if men are perfected from within, the world would

gradually obtain millennium: "Jupiter's fall means reform's triumph. Prometheus represents the enlightened thinkers of Shelley's day. Mercury the supine drudges in the pay of the governing classes (Jupiter), and the Furies the sycophants who grow fat on the spoils of their master and lit off steam by persecuting reformers."³⁹

In accounting for the positive shift in Shelley's stand so far as his concept of evil is concerned, Carl Grabe remarks "Prometheus Unbound was written amid the beauty of an Italian summer and autumn, but from it the enthusiasm and faith of Shelley's youth are gone. Besides Prometheus Queen Mab is no more than an eloquent piece of rhetoric, but it is ardent, hopeful: the golden age is imminent; reform and the principles of the Revolutionary philosophy are soon to transform the world. The immediacy of that hope, that faith is in Prometheus absent. Prometheus, the mind of man, himself the creator of the Gods, is yet by them bound to torture, is enchained by the evils of his own creation, and must endure all but endless woe before he frees himself. The ultimate despairing hope remains that he will, he must, do so. But utopia is no longer a matter of few reforms and the overthrow of kings and priests. Man must change his own character; love must displace hate. Prometheus Unbound is the work of a poet who has ceased to be a reformer and has become a philosopher."⁴⁰

39 Desmond King-Mele: op.cit., p. 198.

40 Carl Grabe: Prometheus Unbound An Interpretation : op. cit., pp. 7-8.

The overthrow of Jupiter and the liberation of Prometheus in quick succession confused many critics about Shelley's message and the role of Demogorgon has made confusion worse confounded. To understand this apparent enigma, we are to proceed to the whole issue from cosmic perspective. Jupiter is bound to fall not because, as Aeschylus believed, he produced mightier offspring but because of Prometheus attaining perfection from within since he has transcended Fate. "Indeed, Shelley's play in no way provides for the possibility that Jupiter could have prevented his fall by avoiding Thetis; the causal chain stretches back from Demogorgon to Asia and to Prometheus' repenting of his curse and his refusal to submit by revealing any 'secret'.... Deprived of omnipotence by Prometheus' retention of his will. Jupiter is under the illusion that by marriage to Thetis he can propagate his own omnipotent perpetuity, only to find himself, in ironic fact, confronted by the force that will undo him."⁴¹

Jupiter expects that 'from Demogorgon's vacant throne' the 'dreadful night' would appear in the 'destined Hour' to trample out man's rebellious spirit. "But of course Demogorgon's throne is not vacant -- at least not in the sense that Demogorgon no longer exists -- as Jupiter in his blinding pride believes. Nor is Demogorgon an embodied spirit."⁴² Of Demogorgon Panthea says that she sees a 'mighty darkness'

41 Earl R. Wasserman: Shelley's Prometheus Unbound: The Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore; 1965, pp. 87-88.

42 Ibid., p. 88.

Filling the seat of power, and rays of gloom
 Dart around, as light from the meridian sun,
 Ungazed upon and shapeless; neither limb,
 Nor form, nor outline; yet we feel it is
 A living Spirit.

(Prometheus Unbound: Act II, Scene iv, 2-6)

The concept of Demogorgon is somewhat akin to the Hindu concept of 'Amogh Niyati' (the inevitable collective fate). It is some sort of pre-destined Necessity working through inscrutable ways for the ultimate good. The change brought about by this agent often seems to be sudden and unexpected since its long-process of silent spade work is often incomprehensible.

In Prometheus Unbound Shelley tries to accomplish the apparently impossible task of fusing three diverse elements, Revolutionary social philosophy, Neo-Platonism and scientific speculation into a unified whole. "He must reconcile materialism and idealism, physics and metaphysics, science and religion. Prometheus Unbound is the expression of Shelley's effort so to do."⁴³ And tracing the history of Shelley's intellectual development, as to how from a rebel he turned a reformer and then almost a philosopher. Carl Grabe says "Shelley's intellectual history, his ardent advocacy of utopian ideals in extreme youth and his grudging surrender of his hope in their immediate realisation, is in no way unusual or peculiar. It is the experience of idealistic youth the

43 Carl Grabe: Prometheus Unbound: op.cit., p. 10.

world over. The world proves more formidable, less amenable to reason, than youth can credit. With the shock of realization several consequences are characteristic. In ill-balanced minds fanaticism becomes a habit. In the weak, worldly self-interest leads often to complete apostasy; the anarchist and communist of twenty becomes at forty the typical bourgeois, hostile to all reform. But those who retain their idealism and whom disappointment does not make pessimists become the reformers who effect the slow alterations in society which we call progress. If practical expression is denied such, as in the instance of Shelley, the passion to improve the lot of man finds often an outlet in some form of art."⁴⁴

The Mask of Anarchy (1819) was composed in the white heat of passion aroused by "the terrible and important news of Manchester",⁴⁵ called Peterloo after Waterloo. Shelley was fully convinced of the fact that factory system which sucks the labourer pale, the oppressiveness of the Corn Laws and the ruthlessness of the Tory Government were ugly symptoms of "the terrible storm which is approaching. The tyrants here as in the French Revolution, have first shed blood."⁴⁶ He, therefore, told the people of England, loud and bold, that "there will be no coming to close quarters until financial affairs decidedly bring the oppressors and the oppressed together."⁴⁷

44 Ibid., pp. 8-9.

45 Shelley to Peacock: September 9, 1819, Vol.II, p.119.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.

Shelley was singularly persistent in one of his stands. He always ranged himself on people's side as he had seen the miserable plight of the poor under the social system of the time and the sub-human living condition of the labouring classes aroused his indignation against oppression of the industrialists with the connivance, if not active support, of the government. Shelley gave greater importance to the governed than to the government because the institution of government is primarily and wholly meant for the benefit of the governed. "A man has no right to be a king or lord or a bishop but so long as it is for the benefit of the people and so long as the people judge that it is for their benefit that he should impersonate that character."⁴⁸ He squarely blamed the then existing social, political and religious institutions for contriving slavery for the working class and for providing unchartered freedom to the rich. Members of the working class irrespective of age and sex, are hardly able to meet the bare necessities⁴⁹ of life; on the otherhand, even 'asses, swines, dogs, of the rich are better fed than the children of the poor. Shelley takes a modern view when he defines freedom as 'for the labourer thou art bread; thou art clothes and fire, and food for the trampled multitude; to the rich thou art a check; thou

48 A Philosophical View of Reform, p.232.

49 'Tis to work and have such pay
As just keeps life from day to day
In your limbs, as in a cell
For the tyrants' use to dwell.

So that ye for them are made
Loom, and plough, and sword and spade,
With or without your own will bent
To their defence and nourishment.

(The Mask of Anarchy, XL-XLI, 160-167)

art justice -- never for gold; thou art wisdom, peace; liberty, Love'
and so on (The Mask of Anarchy, Stanzas LIV-LXI). Freedom is the
starting point for any progress since it brings about intellectual
awakening

Science, poetry, and Thought
Are thy lamps; they make the lot
Of the dwellers in a cot
So serene, they curse it not.

(Ibid., LXIII, 254-257)

Shelley mostly believes in non-violence and in peaceful resistance
but, in extreme cases, when the tyrants and oppressors refuse to mend
themselves under the moral pressure of peaceful resistance, he does not
hesitate to advocate the use of force and violence. In this poem
his revolutionary zeal reaches its fore when he gives a clarion call to
the have nots to stand up as one man and to take the cudgel to bring the
oppressors to book.

Rise like lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number --
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you
Ye are many -- they are few.

(Ibid., Stanza XCI)

We fully agree with Mrs. Shelley when she says that The Mask
of Anarchy was "written for the people"⁵⁰ to show them "how to resist"
and with Karl Marx who opined that had Shelley lived longer he would

50 Note on The Mask of Anarchy by Mrs. Shelley, p. 345.

always have been one of the advance guards of Communism.

In an earlier shorter poem To Wordsworth, Shelley politely rebuked the elder poet; but it seems he was not satisfied with his earlier mild chiding and hence he composed Peter Bell the Third (1819) expressing his views more clearly. Shelley once appreciated William Wordsworth since he had hailed with rapture the 'dawn' of the French Revolution; but now he criticizes the same Wordsworth since he retraced his steps and turned a reactionary. Shelley goes a step further and opines that Wordsworth's decline of poetic power can be traced to his apostasy. Shelley admired Wordsworth's poetry, "he read it perpetually, and taught others to appreciate its beauties"⁵¹ but Wordsworth's pamphlet supporting the candidature of a son of Wordsworth's patron, Earl of Lonsdale of Tory party against that brilliant Whig, Henry Brougham, in a parliamentary election, evoked Shelley's scathing criticism. He so much resented Wordsworth's conservative attitude that he wrote "What a beastly and pitiful wretch that Wordsworth. I can compare him with no one but Simonides, that flatterer of the Sicilian tyrants, and at the same time the most natural and tender of the lyric poets."⁵²

If analysed in the light of this conviction it seems that Peter Bell the Third stands "as a warning -- not as a narration of the reality".⁵³ Wordsworth's recantation is explicitly the theme of the poem. Peter's changed station can be linked to that of Wordsworth:

51 Note on Peter Bell the Third by Mrs. Shelley, p.362.

52 Shelley to T.L.Poole, July 25, 1818, Vol. II, p. 26.

53 Note on Peter Bell the Third by Mrs. Shelley, p. 363.

But Peter, though now damned, was not
 What Peter was before damnation.
 Men often times prepare a lot
 Which ere it finds them, is not what
 Suits with their genuine station.

(Peter Bell the Third, Part Fourth, 268-72)

and about the lack of Wordsworth's moral courage Shelley's attack is more scathing:

But from the first 't was Peter's drift
 To be a kind of moral eunuch,
 He touched the hem of Nature's shift
 Felt faint-- and never dared uplift
 The closest, all -- concealing tunic.

(Ibid., 313-317)

Not only Wordsworth, Shelley did not spare even Southey and Coleridge for their disavowal of the lofty ideals they had once cherished. Southey, points Shelley, became a renegade and that caused a decline of his poetic gift blunting his poetic sensibility. Coleridge, after he lost faith in progressive ideology, became an uninspired poet.

He was a mighty poet -- and
 A subtle-souled psychologist;
 All things he seemed to understand,
 Of old or new -- of sea or land --
 But his own mind -- which was a mist.

(Ibid., Part Fifth, 378-82)

Shelley's poetry of the fourth phase shows richness and maturity as well as variety of thought: selfishness makes a man callously indifferent to the suffering of his fellow-human being thereby ushering in misery; love

without marriage is superior to marriage without love; evils can be diminished, if not completely eliminated, by the act of the will; national property depends on freedom and freedom can be achieved and maintained by sacrifice and suffering; and the course of violent revolution may be adopted only when peaceful means fail to remedy the wrong.

Chapter - VIII

THE FIFTH PHASE (1820-1822)

The poetical works of the fifth and last phase show as if Shelley had some premonition that he had almost reached his journey's end. The brief poetical career of Shelley can be compared to the course of a river. Normally, a river has three different stages; the initial stage, the middle stage and the final stage. In the initial stage, i.e., near the source of its origin, mostly among mountaneous regions, it gushes out with strong force and fury, removing the hardest obstacles ~~on~~ its way. In the middle stage it is calmer, quieter and slower and it envelops larger area and many elements in its fold. And in the final stage it is broadest, calmest and most serene, apparently looks motionless and like a stoic prepares itself for merging its own entity into the vast and wide sea. Similarly in his earliest phase Shelley, like an angry and uncompromising youngman, tries to remove all shades of evil, all forms of oppression and like a bullet-stricken tiger tries to pounce upon anything he suspects to be the cause of the majority's wee. In the middle phase he becomes more realistic, tries to see a particular thing from many angles and turns a reformer from a revolutionary. And in the final phase, he is calm, quiet, serene, self-composed; transcends many worldly affairs and turns more or less a philosopher.

After the composition of Peter Bell the Third another qualitative change is discernible in Shelley. It is popularly believed that at this stage Shelley "shrank instinctively from portraying human passion, with its mixture of good and evil, of disappointment and disquiet."¹ That is to a great extent true so far as his poetical works are concerned but his prose work, especially his letters, show his constant interest in political affairs. In a letter to Maria Gisborne he says "I have deserted the odorous gardens of literature to journey across the great sandy desert of politics."² But McNiece points to a different direction when he says, "Shelley rejected an active career in politics. The disciple of the 'religion of humanity' could best arouse his brethren to a consciousness of power for good in the human will by the diffusion of knowledge. This decision did not imply, however, any indifference to political reform".³ It is interesting to note that his thought in the final phase tends to become more and more philosophical; instead of dwelling on social evils and other mundane affairs, he is inclined to lay more emphasis on universal problems. It is only natural because one's interest about the surface lessens with the depth of his penetration. To an astronomer, charting the course of 'heavenly bodies' social problems of men on earth are bound to be insignificant.

1 Note on The Witch of Atlas by Mrs. Shelley, p.389.

2 Shelley to John and Maria Gisborne, November 6, 1819, Vol.II, p.150.

3 Gerald McNiece, Shelley and the Revolutionary Idea: Harvard Univ.Press; Mass., 1969, p.45.

On some important issues, it seems, Shelley formed his broad opinion at early stages of his life and he stuck to these opinions almost throughout his life, with minor shifts here and there. Importance of freedom was one such concept. Prof. McNiece pays a glowing tribute to Shelley on account of his this consistency. "Finally I present and praise him for a quality of heroic persistence in a good cause in a bad time. I have always admired Shelley for the courage and consistency of his political convictions, especially in view of his background and his opposition."⁴ Shelley always realized the importance of freedom in the life of a country and his Ode to Liberty (1820) is a re-affirmation of his faith. A keen observer of public events and a champion of liberty as he was, he felt very happy on knowing that "the beloved Ferdinand has proclaimed the constitution of 1812, and called the Cortes. The inquisition is abolished, the dungeons opened, and the patriots pouring out."⁵ Shelley was remorsefully aware of the inglorious state of affairs of the Spaniards since Liberty⁶ was not there.

The plight of the common man of Spain was miserable, they being victims of innumerable forms of evil emanating from oppression and tyranny in the political system. They

4 Ibid., p. IX.

5 Mary Shelley to Maria Gisborne, March 26, 1820, quoted in N.I. White's Shelley, Vol. II, p. 191.

6 But this divinest universe
Was yet a chaos and a curse
For thou wert not.... (Ode to Liberty, II, 21-23).

Groaned, for beasts warred on beasts, and worms on worms,
And men on men; each heart was as a hell of storms.

(Ode to Liberty, II, 29-30)

And naturally it was hardly possible for Shelley to remain indifferent to such an epoch-making event. "The sword", says Dowden, "which Shelley could fitliest wield was that of keen-edged song."⁷

Drawing a picture of the miserable plight of the people, Shelley rightly points out that ignorance of the great ideal of 'liberty' is to a great extent responsible for brutality and war among the savage⁸ people; it is on slavery that monarchy and its accomplice tyranny subsist and in turn give rise to other oppressive institutions which augment human misery:

Into the shadow of her pinions wide
Anarchs and priests, who feed on gold and blood
Till with the stain their inmost souls are dyed,
Drove the astonished herds of men from every side.

(Ode to Liberty, III, 42-45)

As regards remedial measures, Shelley suggests that if the spirit of liberty can implant strong will power in men, only then they will be able to stand against oppressive forces and defend the rights of their suffering brethren. The wisemen should simultaneously prepare the masses subjectively by suggesting ways and means of doing away with the tyrannical

7 Edward Dowden, The Life of P.B.Shelley: London, 1966, p.461.

8 If on his own high will, a willing slave,
He has enthroned the oppression and the oppressor.

(Ode to Liberty, XVII, 244-245)

institutions. However, Shelley holds that wisdom and the exercise of will by men are a must for the attainment of liberty as without these virtues liberty will remain a distant dream.

O Liberty! if such could be thy name
Wert thou disjoined from these, or they from thee:
If thine or theirs were treasures to be bought
By blood or tears, have not the wise and free
Wept tears, and blood like tears?

(Ode to Liberty, XVIII, 266-270)

Brooding deeply over the fallen state of man all over the world, Shelley came to the dismal conclusion that in life itself there is present some active principles of distortion and corruption that have veiled from man's eyes the supreme glory of Beauty and Love. Shelley holds that man is responsible for this self-imposed blindness on him and on seeing the cruel treatment meted out to man by man, Shelley, like Wordsworth, shudders to think 'what man has made of man'. The Letter to Maria Gisborne is a sincere record of Shelley's shattered faith. Carl Grabe is of the opinion that the thoughts described in this poem "suggests man's cruelty to man, the loss or hope of liberty, and the final comforting assurance that earthly life is illusion and that a happier one lies beyond."⁹

To understand the note of sadness in this poem we must take note of the fact that Shelley's spirit was at a low ebb at that time. His

9 Carl Grabe, *op.cit.*, p. 327.

Prometheus Unbound had been severely criticised in a review of the Quarterly and the reviewer made "use of the domestic calamities of Shelley the theme of the foulest and the falsest slander... with the cowardice no less than the malignity of an assassin."¹⁰ Leigh Hunt was one of the very few who appreciated Prometheus Unbound. In a letter dated May 1, 1820 addressed to Leigh Hunt thanking him for his kind appreciation of Prometheus Unbound, Shelley justifies his claim to have an immense understanding of the position of man in social context when about his publisher, Ollier's lack of moral courage he says, "It is less the character of the individual than the situation in which he is placed which determines him to be honest or dishonest; perhaps we ought to regard an honest bookseller, or an honest seller of anything else in the present state of human affairs as a kind of Jesus Christ. The system of society as it exists at present must be overthrown from the foundations with all its superstructure of maxims and of forms before we shall find anything but disappointment in our intercourse with any but a few select spirits. This remedy does not seem to be one of the easiest....If faith is a virtue in any case it is so in politics rather than religion..."¹¹

About the background of the composition of the poem Carl Grabe says, "Written in Henry Reveley's workshop amid engines, tools, and oddments which Shelley enumerates whimsically, the poem nevertheless glances at graver matters which suggest the preoccupations of his thought."¹²

10 Shelley to Robert Southey, June 26, 1820, Vol.II, p.224.

11 Shelley to Leigh Hunt, May 1, 1820, Vol. II, p.191.

12 Carl Grabe, op.cit., p. 326.

Mrs. Gisborne in London will see friends dearer to Shelley and whom Shelley would most like to meet, Leigh Hunt among them.

You will see Hunt -- one of these happy souls
Which are the salt of the earth, and without whom
This world would smell like what it is -- a tomb.

(Letter to Maria Gisborne, 208-210)

Shelley has often been appreciated for wrong reasons and it is a common allegation that in his works there is too much treatment of evil and To a Skylark enjoys popularity to a great extent because of his avoidance in it of evil and the horrible. Of course there is an undercurrent of deep dejection and frustration when he says:

Our sincerest laughter/With some pain is fraught
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

(To a Skylark, XVIII, 88-90)

Shelley makes the plight of mankind appear more miserable by juxtaposing it with the joy of the bird with whose 'clear keen joyance' 'laughter cannot be' and who 'lovest', but never knowest 'love's sad satiety. Carlos Baker finds an expression of Shelley's humanitarian thought and reforming zeal in To a Skylark when he observes "The comparison of 'The Skylark' to a poet 'hidden in the light of thought', whose singing converts the world to 'sympathy with hope and fears it heeded not' might be construed as evidence of Shelley's continued hopefulness about the possibility of the world's redemption through the power of human thoughts when it is given memorable expression in

poetry".¹³ And if we look into the imaginative pattern of Shelley's mature thought through this poem, we will realize that Shelley tried 'to see the world in a grain of sand', because the bird is, what G. Wilson Knight calls "a window through which to examine the universal substance; in it he focuses the cosmic."¹⁴

The Witch of Atlas (1820) is an important poem so far as Shelley's treatment of evil is concerned, though it is a difficult poem which defies proper critical evaluation. To Desmond King-Heb it is "nothing but a carefree extravaganza",¹⁵ but Harold Bloom has all praise for this poem since it is "a brilliant congregation of ideas such as his senses gathered, and his fancy coloured, during his rambles in the sunny land he so much loved."¹⁶

So long Shelley had been championing the cause of 'Love' in eradicating a bulk of evil from the fabric of human society, but of late he has come to realize that man's desire of 'love' and 'beauty' is insatiable as it is akin to the 'desire of the moth for the star'.

At first the Witch was self-contained and lived alone in her wild lovely home completely immersed in her own thoughts but that could not satisfy her thirst. She became affection-starving and eagerly longed

13 Carlos Baker, Shelley's Major Poetry: Princeton; 1948, p.202.

14 G. Wilson Knight, The Starlit Dome: Methuen; 1968, p. 202.

15 Desmond King-Heb, op.cit., p. 258.

16 Harold Bloom, Shelley's Mythmaking: New York; 1969, p. 169.

for communion with man and subsequently she passed through 'the peopled haunts of mankind'. For the first time in her life she sees the stark realities of the world:

... all the code of custom's lawless law
Written upon the brows of old and young;
'This', said the wizard maiden, 'is the strife
Which stirs the liquid surface of man's life.

(The Witch of Atlas, LXII, 541-44)

The Witch saw the glaring contrast between the lives of the privileged rolling in luxury and that of the underdogs starving for food.

And she saw princes couched under the glow
Of sunlike gems; and round each temple-court
In dormitories ranged, row after row,
She saw the priests asleep -- all of one sort --
For all were educated to be so, --
The peasants in their huts, and in the port
The sailors she saw cradled on the waves,
And the dead lulled within their dreamless graves.

(The Witch of Atlas, LXIV, 553-560)

In the later phase of Shelley's life the influence of Plato has been the greatest and The Witch of Atlas points to the great influence on Shelley of Plato's doctrine of love. Shelley translated Plato's one of the Dialogues, entitled The Banquet which deals with the concept of 'love'. Shelley thought The Banquet to be "the most beautiful and perfect among all the works of Plato" (Shelley's preface to The Banquet). Echoing Plato's view about the two kinds of love, the Uranian and the

Pandemian; the divine and the carnal, Shelley observes, "I will endeavour to distinguish which is the love whom it becomes us to praise, and having thus discriminated one from the other, will attempt to render him who is the subject of our discourse the honour due to his divinity... but since there are two Venuses ... of necessity must there also be two Loves, the Uranian and Pandemian companion of those goddesses."¹⁷ The Pandemian Love is of the flesh, "But the attendant on the other, the Uranian ... is the Love who inspires us with affection, and exempts us from all wantonness and libertinism."¹⁸ The neo-Platonists also expounded this doctrine of the two loves, the sensual and the intellectual. "The intellectual Love is the attribute of Diety, of the One in whom exists the perfect Love, Truth and Beauty to which the soul aspires. Earthly Love is but the shadow of the Divine Love, its material or sensuous manifestation in the world of created things.... The duality of love in its heavenly and in its earthly manifestations is implicit in the personification of love in the Witch of Atlas."¹⁹

Notwithstanding his personal frustration, Shelley always took interest in political developments affecting the lot of common man and he used to feel elated on receiving any news of the victory of the oppressed in any corner of the globe. Neapolitans achieved hard-earned success in the struggle for freedom. Shelley's joy knew no bounds and he gave expression to his feelings in Ode to Naples (1820). His

17 Carl Grabe, op.cit., p. 239.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid., pp. 239-240.

enthusiasm reached such a height that he hailed the victory as the signal of greater liberty to come.

Naples! thou heart of men which ever pantest
 Naked, beneath the lidless eye of Heaven.
 Bright Altar of the bloodless sacrifice,
 Which armed Victory offers up unstained
 To Love, the flower-enchained !
 Thou which wert once, and then didst cease to be,
 Now art, and henceforth ever shalt be, free,
 If Hope, and Truth, and Justice can avail,
 Hail, Hail, all hail.

(Ode to Naples, 51-65)

Shelley was practical enough to understand that the road to freedom was not a smooth one as the oppressors would always try to frustrate the plan of the oppressed to attain freedom and even when freedom was attained, they would try to sabotage that. Shelley knew that liberty lays under the shadow of a sword and, therefore, he concludes the poem with a clarion call to protect the spirit of freedom on the face of ruthless opposition. Simple attainment of freedom is not enough; it has to be maintained and perpetuated. Taking lesson from the failure of the French Revolution, Shelley thinks that love among the people, where revolution has brought about freedom, is a pre-requisite for the perpetuation of liberty.

Queen Caroline was publicly tried for infidelity. As an incident it was not something very significant for Shelley as he was never favourably inclined towards kings and queens. But in this case the incident aroused Shelley's indignation because the trial of queen Caroline appeared to

Shelley to be a symbol of oppression of the womenfolk signifying the act of stifling the freedom of women and secondly her enemies were worse than she. This was the occasion for Shelley's composition of Oedipus Tyrannus or Swellfoot the Tyrant (1820) which according to Mary Shelley "breathes that deep sympathy for the sorrows of humanity and indignation against its oppressors."²⁰ Since the trial was the complete public display of dirty royal linen, the wings came forward to champion the cause of the Queen. Nevertheless, in Shelley's drama a "serious sense of impending revolution underlies the entire action and hints that the author's jesting is almost consciously against the grain."²¹

The King George IV is involved in all kinds of sensual pleasure and is naturally indifferent to the miserable plight of his subjects. The King miserably fails in his duty to make arrangements of the bare necessities for the starving masses and to cover his own failure suggests like an escapist, various measures to reduce population. Shelley was bitterly critical of this short-sighted policy of drastic population control propounded by the great reactionary economist, Malthus, who suggested that to make any system of government to work, population should be curbed, as normally, while the food-production increases in Arithmetic Progression (1,2,3,4, etc.), the population increases in Geometric Progression (1, 2, 4, 8, etc.) in a given time-span. Hence the cynical economist suggested that to keep the poor on the subsistence level was

20 Note on Oedipus Tyrannus by Mrs. Shelley, p.410.

21 N.I.White, *op.cit.*, Vol. II, p. 226.

the only effective means of checking the growth of population. Shelley could see the falacy of Malthus's argument and time has proved beyond doubt that Malthus was erroneous otherwise by now the majority of the population of world would have been wiped out. In Oedipus Tyrannus Shelley caricatured the plan of reducing population in an irrational way.

Moral restraint I see has no effect,
 Nor prostitution, nor our own example,
 Starvation typhus-fever, war, nor prison --
 This was the art which the arch-priest of Famine
 Hinted at his charge to the Theban clergy --
 Cut close and deep, good Noses.

(Oedipus Tyrannus, I, i, 74-79)

Introduction of money has been another positive evil as since then money has been given importance out of proportion and the human society which previously was 'value-oriented' (honouring values like honesty, truthfulness, moral courage, perseverance, tolerance, etc.) has become 'money-oriented'. And the introduction of the 'Paper-Money' was a great hoax since this was the result of defective fiscal policies²² which resulted in huge National Debt. Shelley was of the firm conviction that notwithstanding all high-sounding words ultimately the burden of National Debt would fall on the shoulders of the poor. As such he fervently

- 22 Do the troops mutiny? - decimate some regiments;
 Does money fail? - come to my mint-coin paper,
 Till gold be at a discount, and ashamed
 To show his bilious face, go purge himself,
 In emulation of her vestal whiteness.

(Oedipus Tyrannus, I, i, 103-107)

pleaded for the disbandment of the standing army and immediate withdrawal of the privileges of the clergy and the aristocracy. Thus, Oedipus Tyrannus reveals not only the facts of the intra-royal family dispute but also Shelley's "indestructible resolution to strike back at authority."²³

Often ignorance leads to some unique achievement. In 1821 John Keats died of consumption. Even for about more than a month after Keats' death, Shelley was thoroughly ignorant of the fact and when he came to know of the tragic end of 'the most accomplished specimen of the Romantic School', Shelley was again under a misconception about the immediate cause of Keats' death. He had the idea that it was the inhuman and malicious criticism of his works which pierced this noble soul. The immediate result was the composition of Adonais (1821) which is still one of the best elegies written in English language.

Shelley had a life-long obsession for a positive evil, intolerance, which emanates from narrow principles of taste. Adonais is an unmistakable record of Shelley's "known repugnance to the narrow principles of taste."²⁴ As Shelley firmly believed that "the brutal attack in the Quarterly Review excited the disease"²⁵ that led to Keats' death, he wrote this "Lament on the death of poor Keats, with some interspersed stabs on the assassins of peace and of his fame."²⁶ Shelley championed the cause

23 Edmund Blunden, *Shelley*, Oxford, 1965, p.227.

24 Preface to Adonais, p. 430.

25 Shelley to Charles Ollier, June 8, 1821, Vol. II, p.297.

26 Ibid.

of the oppressed. Through Adonais he paid glowing tribute to Keats and hurled abuses against Keats' oppressors not because Keats was a good friend of Shelley and in fact, they were not close to each other, but simply because he sincerely felt that some injustice had been done to a noble soul. It can be surmised that had any other person been the victim of such oppression, Shelley would have been among the front-rowers to register his protest as he had done earlier in A Letter to Lord Ellenborough when a publisher was unjustly prosecuted for publishing Tom Paine's Rights of Man, and on many other such occasions.

Adonais reached such a height of elegance because Shelley got himself fully involved in the composition. Shelley reasonably thought that so far as the ill-appreciation of creative work was concerned, his position was as vulnerable as Keats' had been and the attack, to which Keats succumbed, had been tormenting Shelley since long. We fully agree with Newman Ivy White when he says that Shelley's championing of Keats' was "strengthened by his constant view of himself as a victim of persecution."²⁷ Though Shelley's immediate purpose was to put venom on the assassins (?) of Keats but he could soon transcend his initial rage which enabled him to dress Adonais with "a highly spiritualized modern thought."²⁸

Shelley decided to fight back the injustice done to his fellow-poet, though by the time he set to compose Adonais he had realized that

27 N.I.White, op.cit., Vol.II, p. 296.

28 J.A.Symonds, Shelley (English Men of Letters): India, 1968, p.144.

revenge was one of the greatest of human errors. Notwithstanding his shift in mental attitude, he was convinced that the reactionary reviewers, at the instance to their pay-masters, were determined to stifle the voice of the artists trying to raise the oppressed and frustrated mankind to Hope and Faith through their prophecies; he castigates the Quarterly Reviewers:

Live thou, whose infamy is not thy fame;
 Live! fear no heavier chastisement from me,
 Thou noteless blot on a remembered name,
 But be thyself, and know thyself to be!
 And ever at thy season be thou free
 To spill the venom which thy fangs o'er flow;
 Remorse and Self-contempt shall cling to thee;
 Hot Shame shall burn upon thy secret brow,
 And like a beaten hound tremble thou shall - as now.

(Adonais, XXXVII, 325-333)

The influence of Plato on Shelley reaches its climax in Adonais. Meditating deeply on the metaphysical problems on a cosmic scale, he comes to believe with Plato that the perfect is 'One' which is in Heaven and which is beyond Time and Space; the manifestations of that ideal 'One' are 'Many' which are mundane, bound in 'Time' and 'Space' and hence distorted and corrupt. The 'One' is permanent.

The One remains, the many change and pass;
 Heaven's light for ever shines, Earth's shadows fly,
 Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
 Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
 Until Death tramples it to fragments...

(Adonais, LII, 460-462)

If Shelley's religion had to be defined in one sentence, that would be a blending of Platonism and Pantheism. For Shelley, all Nature is the expression of a pervading impersonal spirit of good, which is very close to the Platonic prototype 'One'. To Shelley, as to Plato, the 'One' stands for 'good'. The 'Many' for 'evil'.

The strong grip of the influence of Plato, and especially his concept of 'love', on Shelley can be seen from Shelley's Epipsychidion. Shelley here idealizes Emilia Viviani and speaks of 'true love' which is another name for Platonic love. The profound influence of the symbol of 'cave' on Shelley can be traced to Plato and in a direct allusion to the parable of the cave in Plato's Republic, where imprisoned mortals sitting in a cave with their back towards the source of light, see only shadows cast on the inner wall by idols moving past the opening of the cave, Shelley writes

In many mortal forms I rashly sought
The shadow of that idol of my thought.

(Epipsychidion, 267-268)

Charles Baker has thrown much light on Epipsychidion in relation to Plato's three fold division of the soul: (1) an immortal spirit, the higher soul, (2) higher mortal or rational soul and (3) a desiring part, the appetite soul. Plato's immortal soul corresponds to epipsychidion, the Sun-symbol symbolizing imagination; higher mortal soul corresponds to Shelley's moon-symbol, symbolizing reason and the

appetitive soul corresponding to Shelley's Comet, symbol of worldly desire.

It may be inferred that Dante's Vita Nuova influenced Shelley's Epipsychidion and Emilia Viviani reminds us of Dante's Beatrice when we hear Shelley speak

Scraph of Heaven! too gentle to be human,
Veiling beneath that radiant form of Woman
All that is insupportable in thee
Of light, and love, and immortality!
Sweet Benediction in the eternal Curse!
Veiled Glory of this lampless Universe!
Thou Moon beyond the Clouds! Thou living Form
Among the Dead! Thou Star above the Storm.

(Epipsychidion, 21-28)

Though Epipsychidion is the most outspoken and eloquent appeal for 'free love',²⁹ 'transcendental love',³⁰ and total involvement,³¹ there are various other aspects of this bewilderingly problematical work.

As Shelley becomes more and more pessimistic about his own

- 29 True Love in this differs from gold and clay,
That to divide is not to take away.
Love is like understanding, that grows bright,
Gazing on many truths; 't is like thy light,
Imagination! which, from earth and sky,
And from the depths of human phantasy,
As from a thousand prisms and mirrors, fills
The Universe with glorious beams, and kills
Error, the worm, with many a sun-like arrow.

(Epipsychidion, 160-168)

- 30 Would we two had been twins of the same mother! (Epipsychidion, 45).
31 I am not thine; I am a part of thee. (Ibid., 52).

affairs and course of life, he clings more to outright optimism about the future of mankind. Shelley misses no opportunity of suggesting the global victory of the oppressed on the basis of some local victories.

Shelley is always lyrical about the contribution of Greece to modern civilisation and says with emphasis that the Greeks stand above all in "their sensibility, their rapidity of conception, their enthusiasm, and their courage."³² So the very fact that the Greeks were being oppressed and exploited tortured Shelley and in his poem *Hellas* (1821) he suggests "the final triumph of the Greek cause as a portion of the cause of civilisation and social improvement."³³ In the same preface Shelley says "this is the age of the war of the oppressed against the oppressors, and every one of those ringleaders of the privileged gangs of murderers and swindlers, called sovereigns, look to each other for aid against the common enemy, and suspend their mutual jealousies in the presence of a mightier fear,"³⁴ and Rogers is of the opinion that the real beauty of *Hellas* consists in the "conflict that it represents -- a conflict between East and West, barbarism and civilization -- all that was symbolized in darkness and light."³⁵

The Turks are out to ruin the Greeks even by the application of the inhuman means of torture against the peace-loving and innocent people of Greece and it is an irony that the Turks should try to turn this

32 Preface to *Hellas*, p. 447.

33 Ibid., p. 446.

34 Ibid., p. 448.

35 N. Rogers, *op.cit.*, p. 291.

'cradle of human civilisation' into a graveyard. In an indignant tone Shelley gives an account of the nefarious activities of the Turks as revealed in the order of the Commander:

Go! bid them pay themselves
 With Christian blood. Are there no Grecian virgins
 Whose shrieks and spasms and tears they may enjoy?
 No infidel children to impale on spears?
 No heavy priests after that Patriarch
 Who bent the curse against his country's heart
 Which cleve his own at last? go! bid them kill,
 Blood is the seed of gold.

(Hellas, 242-249)

The big powers stood silently as spectators showing all the time lip-sympathy for the Greeks. "Russia desires to possess, not to liberate Greece; and is contended to see the Turks, its natural enemies, and the Greeks, its intended slaves, enfeeble each other, until one or both fall into its net. The wise and generous policy of England would have consisted in establishing the independence of Greece, and in maintaining it both against Russia and the Turks; -- but when was the oppressor generous or just?"³⁶ The oppressed Greeks, being denied support of others, stood alone against their oppressor.

The Greeks
 Are as a breed of lions in the net
 Round which the kingly hunters of the earth
 Stand smiling. Anarchs, ye whose daily food
 Are curses, greans, and gold, the fruit of death,
 From Thule to the girdle of the world,
 Come, feast! the board greans with the flesh of men;
 The cup is foaming with a nation's blood,
 Famine and thirst await! eat, drink, and die.

(Hellas, 931-939)

36 Shelley's preface to Hellas.

Shelley always nurtures the unshakable faith in the ultimate triumph of good over evil; of the oppressed over the oppressor; of the havenots over the haves. And on that day only the world will be a fit place for the good to live when

The world's great age begins anew,
The golden years return,
The earth doth like a snake renew
Her winter weeds outworn;
Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires gleam,
Like wrecks of a dissolving dream.

(Hellas, 1060-1065)

Shelley rightly believes that vice breeds its offsprings as does virtue and that "circumstances make man what they are, and that we all contain the germ of a degree of degradation or of greatness whose connection with our character is determined by events."³⁷ Bondage debases a man by lowering his self-esteem as slavery degenerates a whole nation by lowering the social, political, religious and moral standards. Hence for Shelley liberty is a yardstick to measure the stage of attainment of any people. Thus, Hellas summarizes in the words of Charles Baker "the end-result of Shelley's career as a political poet."³⁸

Shelley's last poem The Triumph of Life (1822) was started just before his death. While composing the poem, it seems, Shelley had some premonition that his days were numbered and his The Triumph of Life

37 Notes on Hellas by Shelley, p. 479.

38 Charles Baker, op.cit., p. 182.

was readily a triumph of his artistic life over death.

One single idea haunting Shelley almost throughout his life was the ascertainment of the root-cause of human predicament and emancipation therefrom. It was, it seems, his desire "to utter his sentiments on the inefficacy of the existing religions no less than political systems for restraining and guiding mankind."³⁹ Notwithstanding his personal frustration and the consequent pessimism, he was singularly optimist about the future of mankind. He fervently believed that the future was bound to be bright and not bleak. Dealing with the question of theme and its relation to the title of this poem, King-Hele rightly concludes that "... The title is doubly ambiguous. 'Triumph' may mean simply 'procession', for the existing fragment describes a procession of phantoms. More probably, 'triumph' means 'victory'. If so, is it the victory of Man over Nature and the restraints now stifling him, as in Prometheus Unbound? or is it the victory of Life over men.... The settled melancholy of the existing fragments and references to Life the 'conqueror', might imply the gloomier alternative. But it would be unwise to jump to conclusions: for Act I of Prometheus Unbound was just as grim, and gave no sign of the happy ending; also the title Triumph of Life strikes a buoyant note, and the gloomier interpretation would imply an irony quite foreign to the poem's tone, which is placid and objective, with more of sorrow than of sarcasm. On balance it seems more probable that Shelley intended to show Man triumphing over his present

39 Shelley to Horace Smith, June 29, 1822, Vol.II, p. 442.

travails..."⁴⁰

After the gay and cheerful first forty lines Shelley suddenly proceeds to the sombre vision of the destiny of man.

Methought I sate beside a public way
 Thick strewn with summer dust, and a great stream
 Of people there was hurrying to and fro,
 Numerous as gnats upon the evening gleam,
 All hastening onward; yet none seemed to know
 Whither he went, or whence he came, or why
 He made one of the multitude.

(The Triumph of Life, 43-49)

Approach of evil is hinted at by contrast. The noblest creation, man, is moving like an animal being totally devoid of rationality. They live entirely in the present learning nothing from the past and foreseeing nothing in the immediate future. Man moves, walks, rushes, runs, dances with revelry apparently without any purpose or plan. This utter confusion among the masses arises from inefficacy of the existing systems. People pin hope on and are afraid of, institutions -- social, political and religious. Since they are confused, it is difficult for the people to find the right way to salvation. In the midst of this mad rush appears a chariot emitting a cold glare -- light without heat, since it is the chariot of worldly life. The glare of the chariot is the light of Life; the Sun's light is that of Nature and the stellar light is the light of imagination and creative process. Nature's light obliterates that of the 'imagination'

40 Desmond King-Hele, op.cit., p. 350.

only to be destroyed in turn by the light of Life. Furthermore, the charioteer has four faces, all blindfolded. The 'Shape' is "the evil side of human society in the earthly order, those elements, terrible and alluring, in the rush of circumstance and in the passions of men that combine to falter, deform, and crush personality."⁴¹

Since the poet is utterly confused and cannot make any sense of the whole show, a one-time sufferer and a 'distorted root' turns out to be Rousseau who narrates a running commentary of the procession as well as his own idealized history of life and his fall.⁴² He explains what led him and his companions to the procession. He attributes Napoleon's fall to the latter's reign of disorder, blood and misery:

I felt my cheek
Alter, to see the shadow pass away,
Whose grasp had left the giant world so weak
That every pigmy kicked it as it lay;
And much I grieved to think how power and will
In opposition rule our mortal day,
And why God made irreconcilable
Good and the means of good.

(The Triumph of Life, 224-231)

Shelley was very much concerned about the conflict between 'power and will'; it was a conflict between the power of the rulers and the will

41 F.M. Stowell, Shelley's Triumph of Life in Essays and Studies, pp. 113-114.

42 For in the battle life and they did wage,
She remained conqueror, I was overcome
By my own heart alone, which neither age,
Nor tears, nor infancy, nor now the tomb
Could temper to its object.

(The Triumph of Life, 239-243).

of the people; between the power of the haves and the will of the have-nots. In a conscientious bid to bring about an equilibrium between institutions and opinions, he urged the people to resort to passive resistance and to patiently await 'The Hour' when evil will bring about its own decay. The main stumbling block between 'good and the means of good' was 'blood and gold' -- the wealth which oppressed mankind with all the tools at its command.

In the procession Frederick, Paul, Catherine and 'hoary anarchs, demagogues' are present as they symbolize despotism, cruelty and inequity. Looking back to his own life and action in the world, Rousseau gives a detailed account of "the process of 'growing up', of passing from boyhood to manhood, or from dependence upon nature to recognition that it is dangerous to depend upon nature for too much."⁴³ It is interesting to note that Rousseau's idealized history of his own mind reveals his thoughts, beliefs, superstitions, imaginings. He presents the whole hierarchy of earthly tyrants and their satellites. King-Hele points out that the question in the last line of the poem is probably "Shelley's advice to today's harassed men-of-affairs, who waste their energies trying to run ever faster in the treadmill of worldly life."⁴⁴

Shelley's growing respect for Christ reaches its fore when Shelley says that in the procession 'all but the sacred few' are present and one of the two sacred persons is Jesus Christ, the other person being

43 Harold Bloom, Shelley's Mythmaking: New York; 1969, pp.263-64.

44 Desmond King-Hele, *op.cit.*, p. 359.

Socrates. The influence of Dante is discernible throughout this fragment. Dante seems to control the structure of the poem as well as its theme. The poem attempts a vision of judgment, and Dante seemed to be the inevitable model. The poem bears testimony to the influence of Dante and especially the 'Purgatorio' of Divine Comedy. As Virgil was to guide Dante, so there is Rousseau to guide Shelley. The sufferers in the 'Ninth Circle' of Dante's Divine Comedy know the immediate cause of their suffering but they are totally ignorant of the real cause. Similarly in The Triumph of Life the victims do not know the real reason of their fall.

The main threads of his thought during the last phase are: ignorance of liberty breeds savagery; will and wisdom are the yardsticks of the extent of liberty; worlds emancipation depends upon the power of thought; there is no wealth except the labours of man; the oppressors and the oppressed are pitted against each other; circumstances make man what they are and there is a conflict between 'power' and 'will'.

Chapter IX

CONCLUSION

Of all the Romantic poets Shelley is the most misunderstood and of all the ideas of Shelley, his idea of evil is the most misconstrued. In this connection Carl Grabo rightly observes, "Shelley has never been wholly understood; has indeed, for the most part been thoroughly misunderstood."¹ A careful and chronological study of Shelley's works will show that he had something positive to say about the problem of evil and that what he said was sensible and relevant, his minor inconsistencies notwithstanding. It seems that quite a large number of critics of his age and of the age succeeding conspired not to praise Shelley and if at all to praise him, to do so for wrong reasons. Their concerted action yielded result and for about a century they could turn a majority of the English people allergic, at times hostile, to Shelley. Thanks to the perseverance of a galaxy of critics of the twentieth century, Shelley has, to a great extent, been freed from the haze the earlier critics deliberately placed around him and consequently of late Shelley has been recognized as one of the major poets of the English literature and as one of the best thinkers of all ages.

1 Carl Grabo, *op.cit.*, p.V.

Though the brief span of his life and the entire output of his poetical works show signs of his preoccupation with the problem of evil, Shelley, however, did not suggest any definite and fixed source for the origin of evil, nor [^]did he ~~he did~~ suggest any clear cut method for its eradication. He delved deep into any plausible source of evil, urged people to accept it as the source but did not hesitate to discard his own earlier belief as soon as some new and more reasonable explanation came to his ken. The sincerity of Shelley lies in the fact that he never minced matters and whatever he sincerely believed at any stage, he expressed in unequivocal terms. Thus his changing position armed his opponents to charge him with immaturity and inconsistency and adolescence.

To appreciate Shelley's changing position, to be more precise, his shift of focus, about the identification of evil better, we have divided his literary career into five consecutive chronological phases for the sake of convenience keeping in mind that such compartmentalization of the works of a creative and developing artist might often lead to disastrous consequences.

Shelley's poetry of the first phase (1800-1811) shows that the young poet became conscious of the presence [^]of evil all around as he was well aware of the harm that the man-made institutions -- social, political and religious-- had been doing to the ignorant, innocent and backward masses. He himself had to experience various forms of evil in the form of parental tyranny, social oppression and religious persecution. And consequently his poetry

of the period is a young man's expression of his abhorrence of tyrannical institutions such as monarchy, aristocracy and Christianity. But since he was not well-aware of the currents and cross-currents of social forces, he went on groping in the dark attacking lesser evils vigorously and often ignoring deeper ones. His romantic nature and adventurous disposition set his tone at a higher pitch and made it over-enthusiastic in denouncing evil and this over-enthusiasm in turn tended to obscure his thought. His poetry of the first phase bubbles with reforming zeal, republican sympathy and egalitarian thought. He just touches the fringe of evil.

The composition of The Necessity of Atheism was a turning point of Shelley's career since as a sequel to this he was summarily expelled from the Oxford University. It may be said that this single incident was of immense importance in deciding the future course of Shelley's life as the shock of this abrupt cessation of his university career was too much for him and he for the first time shockingly realized that the world was more formidable and less amenable to reason. The poetical works of the second phase (1812-1814) are replete with bitterness against and scathing attacks on man-made institutions and yet there are discernible the undercurrents of hope for a bright future as well as such shades of thought as reformism, humanitarianism, socialism, feminism and necessitarianism. Influences of Thomas Paine and William Godwin are discernible to a great extent in the works of Shelley at this period. It will be no exaggeration to say that the whole range of his maturer ideas in his later

phase are present in germination in the poetry of the first two phases.

During the third phase (1815-1817) Shelley travelled widely and obtained first-hand experience and objective knowledge of various shades of evil of which he had been subjectively aware from before. Notwithstanding some inconsistencies the poetry of this phase shows a promise of progressive maturity. New ideas are surging in his mind and he feels that poets can, and ~~they~~ should, inspire people to raise their voice against tyranny; that decay of despotism ushers in liberty; that love is the most potent and motivating force in man's life; that Beauty gives grace and truth to the unquiet dream of life; that there is a constant struggle between the forces of good and those of evil; that freedom of men is meaningless without the corresponding freedom of women; and that loveless marriage is a miserable evil.

The poetry of the fourth phase (1818-1819) registers a qualitative change because in March 1818 Shelley left for Italy and there his poetic gift reached a lofty height and became truly philosophical. The poetry of this phase shows richness and variety of thought: selfishness and self-centredness cause misery and endanger liberty; love without marriage is better than marriage without love; evil can be and should be eliminated by ^{an} ~~the~~ act of the will; national prosperity is a great hoax without freedom and for the achievement of freedom sacrifice and suffering are ^a ~~a~~ must; peaceful means should normally be followed but when circumstances demand, violent and revolutionary method, should be adopted.

The fifth and the last phase (1820-1822) is the most matured and philosophical so far as the thought content of Shelley's poetry is concerned. It seems as if Shelley had some premonition of his imminent death. The main threads of his thought during this phase are: Liberty is the panacea for many forms of evil; ignorance of liberty amounts to barbarity and will and wisdom determine the extent of true liberty; power of thought is of utmost importance for the redemption of the world; there is no wealth other than the labour of labourers and masses are the real builders of national wealth; love has the singular power of ushering in unity and peace in society; there is an unending struggle between the oppressors and the oppressed, the exploiters and the exploited, the haves and the have-nots; circumstances go a long way in shaping the destiny of men and in making them what they are; the existing religious political systems are ineffective in properly guiding mankind; and there is a constant conflict between 'power' and 'will'.

His first long poem Queen Mab does not offer ^avery satisfactory identification of the origin of evil. For doing that he needed enough philosophy and that would ^{be} ~~have been~~ too much to expect of a young man of that age. Initially he felt frustrated as it appeared to him that of all creatures inhabiting the globe only man was an outcaste as he did not fit in the grand design of the unspoilt Nature. Interestingly enough the yesterday of man was all bright and good because he was an essential part of the grand scheme of Nature but his today is all dark and evil because, unlike other creatures, he has deliberately deviated from the

path of Nature. Shelley squarely blames the man-made institutions like monarchy and priestcraft for this deviation and consequent degeneration of man. These institutions, under the pretext of doing permanent good to man, deliberately keep them ignorant so that they might remain foolishly complacent with their fallen state. Shelley was of the firm conviction that "if man could shed his ignorance and superstition, the ills of capitalism, priestcraft, and tyranny could not long endure."²

At the time of writing Queen Mab, several incongruous philosophical doctrines, the result of his wide reading from eclectic sources, were surging in his mind. Each of these theories has some influence in shaping his notion of evil. "Naturalism aided by sentimentalism supplied the ideas that nature and man are inherently good, and evil is an accidental thing due to man's departure from the ways of nature; for example in the matter of flesh-eating".³ Shelley's juvenile vegetarian tracts prove that Shelley attributed evil propensities in man to the unnatural food habit of flesh eating.⁴

Being fully sincere in his preaching, Shelley himself gave up flesh-eating in March 1812 and remained a strict vegetarian throughout the

2 Gerald McNiece, Shelley and the Revolutionary Idea: Harvard Univ. Press; 1961, p.153.

3 Melvin, T. Solve, Shelley His Theory of Poetry: New York; 1964, p.36.

4

... no longer now
He slays the lamb that looks him in the face,
And horribly devours his mangled flesh,
Which, still avenging nature's broken law,
Kindled all putrid humours in his frame,
All evil passions, and all vain belief,
Hatred despair, and loathing in his mind,
The germs of misery, death, disease and crime.

(Queen Mab, VIII, 211-218)

rest of his life. In his treatise A Vindication of Natural Diet, Shelley writes "Man and the animals whom he has infected with his society, or depraved by his dominion, are alone diseased. The wild hog, the mouflon, the bison and the wolf are perfectly exempt from malady, and invariably die either from external violence, or natural old age. But the domestic hog, the sheep, the cow, and the dog are subject to an incredible variety of distempers; and like the corrupters of their nature, have physicians who thrive upon their miseries".⁵ And then raising the question "How can the advantages of intellect and civilisations be reconciled with the liberty and pure pleasures of natural life,"⁶ Shelley immediately answers "I believe that abstinence from animal food and spirituous liquors would in a great measure capacitate us from the solution of this important question."⁷

Shelley's early poems show that he could not take evil very seriously because he looked upon it as external~~ities~~ and transient. Man's evil stage was mostly because of the wrong and injustice that had been imposed from outside. In Queen Mab Shelley attacks kings, priests, statesmen, and such other drones and parasites for ushering in and perpetuating the various shades of evil. They are the persons who are directly responsible for the slavery of the mob because they maintain their privileged position by exploiting the weak.

5 A Vindication of Natural Diet, Clark ed. p.83.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

Probing deeply ^{into} ~~about~~ human depravity Shelley opined that extreme social inequality corrupts and debases man. Odd distribution of money is the root of many evils. Reasonable and rational distribution of money will go a long way ^{in doing} ~~to do~~ away with various types of evil. "The descendants of the greatest prince would then be entitled to no more respect than the son of a peasant. There would be no pomp and no parade; but that which the rich now keep to themselves would then be distributed among the people. None would be in magnificence, but the superfluities then taken from the rich would be sufficient when spread abroad to make every one comfortable. No lover would then be false to his mistress, no mistress could desert her lover. No friend would play false; no rents, no debts, no taxes, no frauds of any kind would disturb the general happiness; good as they would be, wise as they would be, they would be daily getting better and wiser. No beggars would exist, nor any of those wretched women who are now reduced to a state of the most horrible misery and vice by men whose wealth make them villainous and hardened; no thieves or murderers, because poverty would never drive men to take away comforts from another when he had enough for himself. Vice and misery, pomp and poverty, power and obedience would then be banished altogether."^R

Though Shelley was very much influenced by Rousseau as is evidenced by his stand on man's primitive innocence and original goodness, Shelley never favoured Rousseau's condemnation of civilization and knowledge. "... Shelley did not share Rousseau's conviction that knowledge and

8 An Address to the Irish People, Clark ed., pp. 51-52.

civilisation have worked the corruption. In fact, Shelley said, Rousseau's description of the noble savage, like Christ's injunction to be as the birds and the lilies, is merely an effective and dramatic way of teaching nobler views of human nature and destiny. Nothing could exceed the misery and squalor of savages in a primitive state. Equality, justice, and knowledge are the associated fruits of higher civilisation."⁹

The Christian concept of original sin and man's subsequent fall from the state of blissful ignorance never appealed to Shelley. On the contrary, he opined that degeneration of mankind is to be traced to the unnatural political institutions. Shelley readily agreed with the radical empiricists that character is the product of circumstances, particularly early circumstance. In ~~the~~^{his} review of Frankenstein Shelley maintained the position that initially Frankenstein was good but it was the corrupt society which turned him a misanthrope by treating him as an 'abortion and anomaly'. As the unnatural circumstances of his existence "became developed in action, his original goodness was gradually turned into ~~an~~extinguishable misanthropy and revenge."¹⁰ Similar factors hold good for all men. "The villain is not society in itself nor civilization nor the advancing knowledge which graces both. It is the corrupted and distorting institutions which have not kept up with the general progress of civilisation. These defective forms blight men from birth."¹¹ But in

9 Gerald McNiece, op.cit., p.154.

10 Review of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, Clark ed., p.308.

11 Gerald McNiece, op.cit., p.154.

one of his letters he wrote, "You say that equality is unattainable, so will I observe is perfection; yet they both symbolise in their nature, they both demand that an unremitting tendency towards themselves should be made, and the nearer society approaches towards this point the happier will it be."¹² In another letter addressed to Hogg Shelley wrote in an apparently dejected mood, "Any very satisfactory general reform is I fear impracticable, human nature taken in the mass, if we compare it with instances of individual virtue is corrupt beyond all hope... is it right that of these the world should be composed? Certainly not, were the evil to be obviated -- but it is not to be obviated, all essays of benevolent reformists have failed. Any step however small towards such obviation is however good, as it tends to produce that which the impos(sible) yet were it pos(sible) wd. be desirable."¹³ These letters appear inconsistent with Shelley's inherent optimism and were the outcome of a period of his mental tension because then he was a bit dazzled with the possibility of the advent of the utopia and he ignored the real obstacle. "The French Revolution demonstrated how social movements, incontestably good in intention and favourable in early development, ultimately may produce evils of bloodlust and anarchy which seem worse than the despotism they overthrow. Energy produces ruin."¹⁴

In terms of the environmental branch of psychology evil within is the result of exposure to evil without. "Men become what they behold, and they may feed on ugliness and poison as well as beauty and truth."

12 Shelley to Elizabeth Hitchener, July 25, 1811, Vol. I, p. 125.

13 Shelley to T.J. Hogg, 9 May, 1811, Vol. I, p. 81.

14 Gerald McNiece, op.cit., p. 155.

But men also act; evil passions can create their objects as well as good ones.... There is a degenerative as well as a progressive tendency loose in the world."¹⁵ As Prometheus says on seeing the Furies

Whilst I behold such execrable shapes,
Methinks I grow like what I contemplate.

(Prometheus Unbound, Act I, 449-450)

In Prometheus Unbound Shelley expresses his mature view of evil as he distinguishes between two kinds of evil: evil that has an objective basis and cannot be eradicated, and evil that is subjective but deeply based. After that grand metamorphosis the human race is still confronted by 'chance, death and mutability' (III, iv, 2D1) and like a matured man the poet remains silent regarding the origin of this kind of evil from which there is no escape. Misunderstanding about Shelley's idea of evil will be removed to a great extent if we attentively listen to what Shelley wants to communicate when he says in his Preface to Hellas, "Let it not be supposed that I think the Gordian Knot of the origin of evil can be disentangled or that there is a true solution of the riddle." Jove is evil incarnate. But who gave him power? It was Prometheus, the champion of mankind. Evil can never be conquered by evil, it is to be conquered by good. The moment Prometheus replaced his hatred for Jove with love, the hour of his emancipation came spontaneously without much fuss.

15 Ibid., pp. 156-57.

Shelley is of the opinion that moral evil exerts a morbid and fascinating influence over man. Count Cenci's plan was to force Beatrice to cause her own complete degradation by reducing her to his own malevolent design when he says:

What I most seek! No, 'tis her stubborn will
Which, by its own consent, shall stoop as low
As that which drags it down.

(The Cenci, IV, I, 10-12)

Often men's infected will permits evil to exist, his desire to the contrary notwithstanding. That is why even Napoleon, 'child of a fierce hour, wreaked so much of destruction of the world's hopes to satisfy his quest for blind power. But even then man is not crooked by nature and he is degenerate simply because the degenerate institutions made him so. "The system of society as it exists at present must be overthrown from the foundations with all its superstructure of maxims & of forms before we shall find anything but disappointment in our intercourse with any but a few select spirits."¹⁶ Though ultimately he discarded Godwin's stand to a great extent, at the outset he fully agreed with him and traced the major moral evils and calamities to social, economic and political institutions. "The system must be changed. Individual moral reform cannot advance very rapidly or extensively while political institutions mold men according to the dead images of the past. Shelley

16 Shelley to Leigh Hunt, May 1, 1820, Vol. II, p. 191.

fundamentally wavered between two approaches, stressing individual reform as a poet, institutional reform as a practical thinker."¹⁷

The failure of the French Revolution shocked many and caused still many to turn renegade but Shelley's approach to the Revolution and his analysis of its failure seemed to be based on sound principles. He agreed with Tom Paine in believing that the orgy of violence let loose by the people during the Revolution was due to the evil influence of the past despotism.

Shelley's creative period synchronised with the later phase of the Revolution; therefore, his understanding and analysis about the various aspects of the Revolution as well as the cause of its failure were a great deal different from that of the Romantic poets of the first generation. His heroes such as Prometheus, Laon, Cythna, etc. are typical heroes of the current revolutionary movement.

But in spite of the French Revolution, the texture of the eighteenth century conservative society did not undergo radical change. All the shades of evil continued unabated: Radicals were being persecuted; Roman Catholics were being tortured; wealth went on accumulating in the hands of the few and the conflict between Conservatism and Liberalism sharpened.

Almost the whole of Europe was suffering from the same type of oppression as the Frenchmen did and naturally they should have also revolted

17 Gerald McNiece, op.cit., p. 159.

as they greeted the French Revolution. But the type of the French Revolution could not be repeated in other countries because the respective Governments encouraged a spirit of jealousy and ferocity being afraid of losing their sway. And Shelley opines that the superstructure of political institutions should be changed lock, stock and barrel. In order to believe in the efficacy of revolution the starting point should be the thesis that institutions mould men. Shelley believed both ⁱⁿ the value and the need of revolution.

Shelley accused religion in general and Christianity in particular of perpetuating human misery by making them live under despicable ignorance. In a letter to Elizabeth Hitchener on July 25, 1811 Shelley wrote that religious establishments "augment in so vivid a degree the evils resulting from the system before us." Man has a fatal propensity for creating Jupiters for tormenting his own soul and for subduing his own imagination. Such deities are the products of man's imagination but once they take shape they become oppressors and impose limits on that imagination to which they owe their existence. The role of established religion is no better. "An established religion turns to deathlike apathy the sublimest ebullitions of most exalted genius and the spirit-stirring truths of a mind inflamed with the desire to benefit mankind."¹⁸

But religious institutions have deceptive appearances and they always put on a mask of benevolence while trying to corrupt and debase human race. Similarly in societies the despotic institutions assume

18 Essay on Christianity, Clark ed., p.213.

attractive masks while unleashing a reign of terror to perpetuate human misery. In Mask of Anarchy Fraud, Anarchy, Hypocrisy, and Murder assume respectable disguises to befool the people. Love and Hope are the hopes for the regeneration of the degenerated human race. The cardinal virtues of freemen are Love, Hope and Self-esteem. Self-esteem is very important because one who has no respect for his own self cannot have any respect for others. In a mind devoid of self-respect and blunted by the prolonged effect of tyranny, the search of self-knowledge may reveal deep-rooted evils within one's heart. "Shelley probed the workings of self-contempt both in the more pessimistic vein of Alastor and The Cenci and the hopeful one of Prometheus Unbound. Beatrice Cenci became, for him, a tragic character by her partial capitulation to the spirit of revenge, retaliation and atonement. By murdering her father, she illustrated microcosmically the power of evil over good. It was the French Revolution in miniature."¹⁹

Shelley considered 'Slavery' as a positive evil as it humiliates the slave as well as dehumanizes the slave-owner. His contempt for all form of slavery prompted him to raise his voice against the despotic rule of foreign rulers in countries like Italy, Greece and Spain and colonies like Ireland and India. His passion for freedom of Italy was aroused when he realized that slavery was the main cause of the miserable plight of the Neapolitans. He dedicated his Ode to Naples to the freedom

19 Gerald McNiece, op.cit., p.162.

struggle of Italy. The Greek war of independence stirred him to write Hellas in which he prophesied the victory of the Greeks over the Turks. His visit to Ireland made him aware of the evils of colonization and as such he worked for their liberation. He also favoured granting of independence to India.

Despite Shelley's balanced and penetrating probe into the problem of evil, his extra zeal for ^amillennium led many to wonder as to how much real evil was to him. His own utterance in Julian and Maddalo to the effect that evil exists because mankind so will and last but not least, Mrs. Shelley's comment in her note to Prometheus Unbound that Shelley believed that mankind had only to will in order to get rid of evil made Shelley's position still more vulnerable. But such ^{an} attitude does not do justice to the poet's unique ability of measuring the gap between what man is and what he should have been. "He may lack the tragic vision of the power of evil, evil overcome only with difficulty through the cooperation of heroic energy and intelligence with some poised and mysterious grace. His position is neither superficial nor static, however."²⁰

In his later years when Shelley turned a reformer from a rebel, there was a shift in his attitude. Prof. Barnard is of the opinion that with Shelley's changed outlook, the problem of human happiness vis-a-vis political justice is "not primarily to give men knowledge of what is right and good, but to arouse in them the will to do that right and

20 McNiece, op.cit., pp.162-163.

act that good which they already know."²¹ At this stage Shelley differed from Godwin and put forward the theory of a separate will which may be corrupted and which needs constant stimulation by imagination.

21 Ellsworth Barnard, Shelley's Religion : Minneapolis; 1937, p.249

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